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Exploring the Benefits of Delivering Arts-Based Mindfulness Groups and Methods in School
Settings

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Abstract

Children and youth with significant mental health challenges often experience academic and social-emotional difficulties at school. Early intervention is linked to improved mental health and academic outcomes in school-aged youth. School boards across Ontario are adopting a universal mental health promotion model where group programming is delivered to full classrooms as a way to enhance wellness in schools. For my advanced practicum, I implemented the Holistic Arts-Based Program (HAP) within the Rainbow District School Board with support from various social workers, educators, and educational assistants. HAP is a group program that teaches youth mindfulness skills and concepts through arts-based and experiential methods. The HAP program is an enjoyable and engaging way to teach mindfulness to youth. My goal was to explore the benefits of delivering arts-based mindfulness groups and methods in school settings. HAP proved to be an excellent program to implement in schools as a way of fostering student resilience, teaching coping skills, and building self-esteem, and self-awareness. Through arts-based and experiential methods, students can learn a variety of tools and strategies that will enhance their wellbeing. Delivering HAP in various schools allowed students to build connections with peers and their teachers. HAP also promoted inclusion, diversity, empathy, and respect for others. Art-based methods enabled students to express themselves and learn about one another in a creative, meaningful, and interactive way. School administration should consider implementing arts-based mindfulness groups in classrooms when selecting universal promotion programs for their schools. Schools are the ideal place to deliver effective and strengths-based group work.

Résumé

Les enfants et les jeunes avec des problèmes de santé mentale rencontrent souvent des difficultés scolaires et socio-émotionnelles à l'école. L'intervention précoce est liée à l'amélioration de la santé mentale et des résultats scolaires chez les jeunes d'âge scolaire. Les conseils scolaires en Ontario adoptent un modèle universel de promotion de la santé mentale dans lequel des programmes de groupe sont offerts dans les salles de classe afin d'améliorer le bien-être des élèves à l'école. Pour mon stage avancé, j'ai mis en œuvre le programme holistique basé sur les arts (HAP) au sein du Rainbow District School Board avec le soutien de divers travailleurs sociaux, éducateurs et assistants en éducation. HAP est un programme de groupe qui enseigne aux jeunes les techniques de pleine conscience grâce à des méthodes basées sur les arts et fondées sur les forces. Le programme HAP est une façon agréable et engageante d'enseigner la prise de conscience aux jeunes. Mon objectif était d'explorer les avantages de la mise en place de groupes et de méthodes de pleine conscience fondés sur les arts en milieu scolaire. HAP était un excellent programme à mettre en œuvre dans les écoles pour favoriser la résilience des élèves, leur permettre d'acquérir des habiletés d'adaptation, et de renforcer leur estime de soi et leur conscience de soi. Grâce à des méthodes basées sur les arts et fondées sur les forces, les étudiants peuvent apprendre une variété d'outils et de stratégies qui amélioreront leur bien-être. La facilitation de HAP dans différentes écoles a permis aux élèves de faire des liens avec leurs camarades et leurs enseignants. HAP a également encouragé l'inclusion, la diversité, l'empathie et le respect des autres. Les méthodes artistiques ont permis aux étudiants de s'exprimer et de se connaître les uns les autres de manière créative, significative et interactive. L'administration scolaire devrait envisager la mise en place de groupes de pleine conscience basés sur les arts dans les salles de classe lors de la sélection de programmes de promotion universelle pour leurs

écoles. Les écoles sont les lieux idéaux pour un travail de groupe influent qui est axé sur les forces.

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Introduction

In Ontario, nearly 1 in 5 children and youth endure a mental health challenge (The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2018). Approximately 70% of these mental health challenges begin during childhood (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2018). In addition, Children's Mental Health Ontario (2018) indicated that young children can also experience serious mental health challenges. Increasingly, families are often unable to access publicly funded mental health services for their children due to long waitlists and lack of services (Reid & Brown, 2008). Early intervention is considered crucial because it can create positive outcomes at school and contribute to improved health throughout the lifespan (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2018). Furthermore, it is reported that half of all children and youth do not attend school due to anxiety and 26% of youth with mental health challenges experience lower academic achievement (CMHO, 2018).

Schools are an ideal place for mental health promotion as children and youth in Ontario spend an abundance of time at school (School Mental Health Ontario, n.d. a). Schools are becoming increasingly focused on supporting the social emotional needs of students in addition to their academic achievement (Rempel, 2012). Delivering mental health services within the education system has the potential to promote student well-being, mental health, and academic achievement (Fazel, Hoagwood, Stephan, & Ford, 2014). In order to promote mental health and well-being, various schools in Ontario are delivering evidence-based group programming in classrooms. For instance, the Rainbow District School Board is providing universal mental health promotion, eliminating stigma, and recognizing early signs of mental health challenges by implementing whole class interventions (Rainbow District School Board, 2018b).

Universal mental health promotion occurs when the entire school collaborates to enhance student well-being (Rainbow District School Board, 2018b). Universal prevention programming is considered a non-threatening approach to promoting mental health and well-being in comparison to a 1:1 therapy session where students may be uncomfortable sharing their thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Rempel, 2012). For instance, a mindfulness-based program can be used as a universal mental health promotion intervention in schools. Implementing a universal mindfulness program could alleviate any stigma that students may experience when pulled out of class to attend a separate program or counselling session (Rempel, 2012). School social workers often implement whole class interventions with support from the classroom teacher. The process of school social workers supporting teachers in the classroom can increase academic outcomes by improving social, emotional, and behavioural functioning in students (Cosner Berzin, McManama O'Brien, Frey, Kelly, Alvarez, & Shaffer, 2011).

Mindfulness is considered a strengths-based intervention because it is not problem or deficit-focused (Rempel, 2012). Mindfulness-based practices and activities promote “empathy, creativity, prosocial relationships, and compassion for self and other, the development of which will help children throughout their lives” (Rempel, 2012, p. 209). School counselors can use mindfulness-based practices and activities to help students acknowledge their many strengths and capacities (Tadlock-Marlo, 2011). This process will help students reach their full potential and enhance their wellbeing (Tadlock-Marlo, 2011). Ultimately, implementing mindfulness practices with youth early can also improve their ability to concentrate in school and enhance their sense of self-awareness (Tadlock-Marlo, 2011).

I completed my advanced practicum within the Rainbow District School Board located in Sudbury, Ontario in order to fulfill requirements for the Master of Social Program at Laurentian

University. I completed my practicum in various schools with the Rainbow District School Board and worked with an assortment of social workers, educators, and educational assistants. As a new member of the Holistic Arts-Based Program (HAP) lab, I had an interest in exploring the benefits of delivering arts-based mindfulness groups and methods in schools. School social work has always been of strong interest to me and I was eager to deliver arts-based mindfulness groups and methods in various classrooms. I envisioned that the Holistic Arts-Based Program (HAP) would be effective within a school environment because of its creative, welcoming, and strengths-based foundation.

The Rainbow District School Board is dedicated to delivering evidence-based programs that are focused on enhancing student resiliency and wellness (Rainbow District School Board, 2018b). Therefore, the Holistic Arts-Based Program (HAP) was delivered in many Rainbow District School Board classrooms. HAP is a group-based program that uses arts-based methods to teach youth mindfulness concepts and skills. Recently, there has been significant interest in using mindfulness-based activities with children and youth (Rempel, 2012). Rempel (2012) argued that it is important to teach mindfulness skills and practices to youth as they will be able to use these tools throughout the life span.

The advanced practicum was designed to develop and enhance my clinical skill set in both individual and group social work practice. In addition, I wanted to obtain a further understanding of school social work, mindfulness, and reflexivity. My first goal was to further my skills as a school social worker through experiential learning, and to deliver optimal care to students and families who experience mental health concerns. My second goal was to enhance my knowledge of personal and professional self-awareness through the practice of mindfulness, and to reflect on my journey of consistent mindfulness practice throughout this process. My third

goal was to gain a greater understanding of mental health promotion and practice in schools. My final goal was to reflect on the combination of research and experiential learning in order to present the benefits of implementing arts-based group work within school settings.

The advanced practicum thesis report will describe my advanced practicum experiences within the Rainbow District School Board in relation to the suitability of delivering arts-based mindfulness groups and methods in school settings. The literature review chapter will explore ecological systems, resilience, and strengths-based approaches in social work practice. The chapter will also examine the importance of mindfulness in social work practice, how mindfulness-based interventions have been applied in school settings, and the benefits of using arts-based and creative methods. In this chapter, I will also highlight gaps in the literature.

Following this chapter, I will provide an in-depth description of the advanced practicum environment. The next chapter will provide a critical reflection regarding my advanced practicum experiences in various classrooms. I will describe observations and major themes that emerged to demonstrate the benefits of delivering arts-based mindfulness groups and methods. In addition, this chapter will describe my growth as a practitioner throughout the advanced practicum experience. The final chapter will conclude the advanced practicum thesis and describe the implications for social work practice with recommendations.

Chapter 1 - Literature Review

The literature review was completed by utilizing multiple databases from the Laurentian University library. Literature searches were conducted using the Social Work Abstracts, Social Services Abstracts, Scholars Portal, Google Scholar, and PsycINFO databases. I began to use various search terms when completing this literature review. These search terms included: social work, school-based mental health, school social work, mindfulness-based interventions in schools, arts-based methods, strengths-based approaches, resilience and youth, and reflexivity. The literature served as a guide for furthering my understanding of school social work models and approaches. In the literature review, I will explore various topics to emphasize the importance of delivering a collaborative, inclusive, and strengths-based classroom program. I will also explore the importance of strengths-based and arts-based approaches as a method of building resilience in youth in schools.

For instance, in this literature review, I will explore ecological, resilience, and strengths-based approaches, classroom interventions, mindfulness and social work, mindfulness-based interventions in schools, and arts-based and creative methods. I will also explore the gaps in the literature, as well as an overall lack of broad topical research surrounding creative methods as a way to teach mindfulness concepts in schools. This literature review will examine the current academic understanding of how mindfulness-based interventions can positively impact school climates and create healthy school environments for both students and staff. Furthermore, I note that the literature provides an abundance of evidence linked to the effectiveness and benefits of early intervention and mental health education for staff and students.

Ecological Systems Approach

Increasingly, ecological approaches are guiding the work of school counsellors (McMahon, Mason, Daluga-Guenther, & Ruiz, 2014). The ecological approach enables social workers to shift away from micro level interventions to macro level interventions (Pardeck, 1988). Ecological approaches assert that effective and appropriate treatment of client challenges will occur when social workers intervene with the “systems that facilitate social functioning including the client’s family, neighbourhood, community, and other critical social systems” (Pardeck, 1988, p. 141). School counsellors who use an ecological approach work closely with the client to obtain a greater understanding of the challenges they are facing in order to develop appropriate goals (McMahon et al., 2014). Therefore, school social workers should consider the multiple systems affecting the client when selecting appropriate interventions for students with mental health challenges.

A shift in service delivery is occurring within many school-based mental health services. There seems to no longer be an emphasis placed on the importance of direct 1:1 intervention with all students who present mental health concerns. Direct practice with students is often applied by school social workers, however, in current changes to social work delivery within educational settings, interventions are implemented to support social-emotional learning (McManama O’Brien, Berzin, Kelly, Frey, Alvarez, & Shaffer, 2011). School social workers who practice through ecological system approaches intervene with the student, family, educator, school, and community (McManama O’Brien et al., 2011). Ecological systems approaches are important to clinicians who practice school social work because it can create strong community, teacher, and family connections within schools (McManama O’Brien et al., 2011). Bridging school and community partnerships can also remove obstacles that are impacting student learning (Anderson-Butcher, Stetler, & Midle, 2006).

Lynn, McKernan McKay, and Atkins (2003) indicated that school social workers benefit the school community by partnering with teachers and school personnel to implement programs and services. School social workers can also provide recommendations to teachers, deliver universal mental health programming, and 1:1 intervention to students (Lynn, McKernan McKay, & Atkins, 2003). School social workers who work closely with educators can encourage prevention, early identification, and intervene when children present with emotional and behavioural challenges at school (Lynn, McKernan McKay, & Atkins, 2003). As teachers are the professionals who observe and interact with the students an overwhelming majority of the time, it is imperative that they be equipped with knowledge and skills to identify mental health concerns and encourage interventions. As a result, educators serve as a vital part of the student success team and it is important that teachers, administrators, and social workers collaborate to ensure the needs of students are being met.

Macpherson, Hart, and Heaver (2016) discussed a resilience framework which is comprised of five sections that are essential to foster resilience and wellbeing in youth. These five sections include “basics, belonging, learning, core self, and coping” (Macpherson, Hart, & Heaver, 2016, p. 550). This resilience framework is considered ecological because it addresses and explores most of the areas in a youth’s life including social, developmental, psychological, and physical domains (Macpherson, Hart, & Heaver, 2016). Exploring these domains in a youth’s life will provide greater insight when planning for student success. Exploring these domains will also enhance the social worker’s understanding of the youth’s social context and what supports are needed to promote well-being.

Resilience and Strengths-Based Approach in Group Work

The field of children's mental health now places a direct focus on strengths and resilience as opposed to problems and challenges (Brownlee, Rawana, Franks, Harper, Bajwa, O'Brien, & Clarkson, 2013). Park and Peterson (2008) argued that all individuals have a set of strengths and believed that these strengths should be acknowledged, celebrated, enhanced, and utilized. In addition, acknowledging strengths and characteristics of students can empower and help them to create positive and healthy relationships at school (Park & Peterson, 2008).

Brownlee et al. (2013) provided a definition for resilience: "Resilience is identified as the process of encountering and coping with the aftermath of negative experiences, resulting in positive developmental outcomes or avoidance of negative outcomes" (Brownlee et al., p. 437). Resiliency factors are described as internal or external factors (Brownlee et al., 2013). Brownlee et al. (2013) indicated that examples of external resiliency factors include "peers, family, school and community" (p. 437) and internal resiliency factors can include "personal qualities such as empowerment, self-control, self-efficacy and personal strengths" (p. 437). According to Gitterman and Knight (2016), resilience theory appeared in the 1980's and in the 1990's became a theory supported by research evidence.

Problem and deficit-focused approaches are often utilized in various social work settings (Gitterman and Knight, 2016). However, Gitterman and Knight (2016) illustrated how group work in the field of social work promotes resiliency in clients by focusing on their strengths. Gitterman and Knight (2016) highlighted that in the field of social work there are systems that may attract towards a problem-based approach as opposed to strengths-based. However, social work practice and education promotes strengths-based practices as a method for assisting and supporting clients because of its strong emphasis on client empowerment and advocacy (Gitterman & Knight, 2016).

Lietz (2007) explained that group work is viewed as a beneficial and crucial modality that is linked to strengths approaches. Lietz (2007) also provided insight into how applying strengths-based approaches can be effective and successful in environments that often experienced frequent absenteeism, early termination of service, and consistent negativity. Lietz (2007) discovered that groups that focus on enhancing skills and resilience, as opposed to problems, created supportive and positive experiences. Strengths-based group work provides the opportunity for participants to move beyond negative thought patterns and problem-focused objectives, and it is powerful when group members share experiences with one another (Lietz, 2007). Group work also allows participants to share experiences with peers and create opportunities for rich discussion about their difficult circumstances and ways they have been resilient (Lietz, 2007).

Lietz (2007) argued that once social workers embrace a strengths perspective, it is important to apply these principles to promote empowerment and mutual aid in social group work practice. In my advanced practicum, I have witnessed how this supportive exchange builds resilience amongst participants and can positively contribute to the group dynamic. The concepts of strengths-based practice and group work foster mutual aid and empowerment among participants (Lietz, 2007). Mutual aid involves promoting people's capacity to express their own needs while responding and acknowledging the needs of their fellow group members (Drumm, 2006). Mutual aid can create an environment where participants are able to support each other while achieving individual and group goals (Drumm, 2006). An important skill in social work practice with groups is the ability to promote mutual aid amongst participants (Gitterman & Knight, 2016). Therefore, mutual aid and empowerment are essential to the group experience.

Strengths-based group work is considered an important part of social work practice with adolescents. Malekoff (2014) outlined seven practice principles for delivering strengths-based group work with adolescents (p. 43):

1. Form groups based on members' felt needs and wants, not diagnoses.
2. Structure groups to welcome the whole person, not just the troubled parts.
3. Integrate verbal and nonverbal activities.
4. Develop alliances with relevant other people in group members' lives.
5. Decentralize authority and turn control over to group members.
6. Maintain a dual focus on individual change and social reform.
7. Understand and respect group development as key to promoting change.

These principles are considered crucial for delivering competent and professional group work with adolescents (Malekoff, 2014). The first principle indicated that the group cannot be built based on the diagnosis or label of a participant (Malekoff, 2014). Instead, the group must be created to address the needs and wants of each participant (Malekoff, 2014). The second principle asserted that the group must be built based on the whole person, rather than solely focusing on the deficits or challenges that they face (Malekoff, 2014). The third principle emphasized the importance of delivering both verbal and nonverbal activities and techniques in groupwork (Malekoff, 2014). Malekoff (2014) indicated that clinicians must abandon the notion that groups can only be successful if participants engage in verbal activities.

The fourth principle described the importance of clinicians collaborating and forming partnerships with families, educators, and school administrators (Malekoff, 2014). Malekoff (2014) explained that although these systems may at times present as angry or anxious, it is crucial for clinicians to embrace these feelings in order to successfully interact with their

children and students. The fifth principle highlighted that group workers can pass control over to the group as a way of empowering members, promoting their strengths, and fostering mutual aid (Malekoff, 2014). The sixth principle discussed the importance of helping group members work towards both individual and social change (Malekoff, 2014). Lastly, the seventh principle explained that each group has a unique group culture and it is important to understand and respect this culture in order to create change (Malekoff, 2014).

Gitterman and Knight (2016) argued that clinicians who adopt a group modality can successfully promote resilience in clients. Participating in group interventions allow a sense of connectedness between members due to having faced similar challenges (Gitterman & Knight, 2016). In addition, group members who have experienced similar circumstances can provide support and advice to one another (Gitterman & Knight, 2016). Gitterman and Knight (2016) recommended that clinicians should invite group members to reflect on the positive ways they have coped with hardships in the past as a way to promote resiliency and growth. This tactic is linked to solution-focused approaches because this skill promotes the idea that clients have the tools to solve their own problems (Gitterman & Knight, 2016).

Researchers have also witnessed how group interventions can relieve stigma and feelings of isolation after experiencing adversity and challenges (Gitterman & Knight, 2016). Gitterman and Knight (2016) highlighted that group work has the potential to foster resilience and it is important to educate social workers on this approach. I agree with Gitterman and Knight (2016) as they concluded that it is important to implement methods that create mutual aid amongst participants in order to successfully promote resilience. Strengths-based group work occurs when mutual aid is present (Moyse Steinberg, 2010). In order for individuals to help themselves or their peers, they must have the ability to draw on their own strengths and capacities (Moyse

Steinberg, 2010). Social workers can help group members acknowledge their strengths and capacities (Moyse Steinberg, 2010). If social group work is not based on acknowledging strengths, mutual aid will not occur as the group will solely be focused on deficits and problems (Moyse Steinberg, 2010). It appears that strengths-based and resiliency approaches have been extensively researched and proven to foster resilience in social work practice and group work. The following section will discuss the importance of implementing classroom interventions.

Classroom Interventions

Mental health professionals within the education system deliver a wide range of school mental health supports and services (Franklin, Kim, Ryan, Kelly, & Montgomery, 2012). However, educators are increasingly becoming involved in interventions that are delivered in the classroom (Franklin et al., 2012). School social work is responsible for providing mental health services and interventions that will enhance the social, emotional, behavioural, and academic functioning of students (Franklin et al., 2012). School social workers and counsellors can model and provide coaching to students within the classroom in an effort to build a wide range of skills (Clark & Crandall Breman, 2009). Consulting and collaborating with school personnel is key when attempting to create change in schools by providing optimal student support (Clark & Crandall Breman, 2009). Clark and Crandall Breman (2009) addressed the benefits of implementing the systemic inclusion model by highlighting that once classroom interventions end, there is a greater chance that students will continue to utilize the skills they learned.

The systemic inclusion model provides services through individual and small-group counselling, large-group classroom work, and collaboration and consultation with educators when delivering interventions in the classroom (Clark & Crandall Breman, 2009). Educators will welcome the additional support from school counsellors as they may be experiencing difficulties

with multiple students who present with behavioural, academic, or social-emotional concerns (Clark & Crandall Breman, 2009). Counsellors can model skills for students, support them within their environment, and gain greater insight into the concerns of the classroom (Clark & Crandall Breman, 2009). This knowledge exchange and teamwork approach between the teacher and the counsellor can benefit the classroom and school as a whole (Clark & Crandall Breman, 2009).

In addition, Clark and Crandall Breman (2009) argued that school social workers who intervene in the classroom help to remove stigma and feelings of isolation for students who are usually removed from class for extra support. It is understandable that students may feel isolated or stigmatized when removed from class for additional support. Peers may then inquire about where the student is going and why which can cause the student to feel marginalized. Clark and Crandall Breman (2009, p. 7) believed that the definition of inclusion by Ferguson (1995) should be applied to school counselling interventions:

“Inclusion is a process of meshing general and special education reform initiatives and strategies in order to achieve a united system of public education that incorporates all children and youth as active, fully participating members of the school community; that views diversity as the norm; and that ensures a high-quality education for each student by providing meaningful curriculum, effective teaching, and necessary supports for each student (p. 285)”.

Clark and Crandall Breman (2009) argued that this particular definition creates a shift from special education inclusion to systemic inclusion. Central to student success is the ability to deliver academic and social-emotional support to all students in addition to providing interventions for the entire classroom (Clark & Crandall Breman, 2009). Applying inclusion

practices to all students will also erase the stigma some students may endure due to their individual needs, and that these methods have the potential to reach all students and positively contribute to the school environment (Clark & Crandall Breman, 2009).

Social work interventions in the classroom can support teachers, students, and families (Viggiani, Reid, & Bailey-Dempsey, 2002). Collaboration is considered a method of exchanging resources and strategies with school personnel who support students who are at-risk of failing (Viggiani, Reid, & Bailey-Dempsey, 2002). School social workers are able to collaborate with school personnel in order to address the barriers that impact academic achievement (Viggiani, Reid, & Bailey-Dempsey, 2002). Collaboration allows families, social workers, school personnel, and community mental health partners to work together in an effort to resolve any challenges (Viggiani, Reid, & Bailey-Dempsey, 2002). Furthermore, teacher and social worker collaborations are vital because school social workers can provide recommendations that can enhance the well-being of students (Cosner Berzin et al., 2011). The following section will explore the benefits of practicing mindfulness, reflexivity, and self-reflection in social work.

Mindfulness and Social Work Practice

Mindfulness is described as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). Mindfulness is considered a holistic philosophy that encourages individuals to experience life in meaningful and effective ways (Coholic, 2019). Coholic (2019) explained that individuals who practice mindfulness have a strong sense of self-awareness that allows them to notice what is occurring internally and externally. This practice helps individuals acknowledge their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours in order to make healthy choices (Coholic, 2019). Kabat-Zinn (2003) highlighted that mindfulness meditation is not

considered an activity that an individual can practice for a short period of time. Mindfulness meditation requires a great deal of practice and effort in order to effectively practice (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

It is essential to consider the many benefits of practicing mindfulness. For instance, “If we are not working on being mindful and if we are not applying mindfulness-based concepts such as self-compassion in our own lives, then it will be very difficult to impart these concepts to others” (Coholic, 2019, p. 3). Also, as described by Kabat-Zinn (2003), one cannot genuinely teach mindfulness without practicing these concepts within their own life. It is becoming increasingly clear that teaching mindfulness is challenging when not applied in your own life. I continue to practice mindfulness in my everyday life in order to successfully facilitate and model mindfulness interventions. In the next paragraphs, I will explore how self-awareness and therapeutic presence is developed through reflexivity, self-reflection, and mindfulness practice.

Reflexivity is crucial in the field of social work. D’Cruz, Gillingham, and Melendez (2007) highlighted that “the reflexive practitioner or researcher is constantly engaged in the process of questioning (self-monitoring) their own knowledge claims and those of others as he/she engages in social interaction and the micro-practices of knowledge/power” (p. 83). Furthermore, clinicians who engage in reflexivity are able to critically pinpoint the history or meaning behind a belief or action (Marlowe, Appleton, Chinnery, & Van Stratum, 2015).

Reflective practice is also considered crucial in the field of social work. Reflective practice encourages social work students to engage in self-reflection (Yip, 2006). Self-reflection is described as an analysis, evaluation, dialogue, and observation of one’s self (Yip, 2006). Yip (2006) explained that social workers who engage in reflective practice acknowledge and assess their own thoughts, feelings, and responses during professional practice. In addition, critical

reflection is described as “a process by which one may identify the assumptions governing one’s actions, question them, and develop alternative behaviors” (Savaya & Gardner, 2012, p. 145). It is important for practitioners to acknowledge the principles and beliefs that guide their practice with clients (Savaya & Gardner, 2012).

Engaging in reflexivity and reflective practice will enable practitioners to develop a deeper sense of self-awareness. Critical self-awareness enables students to acquire a greater awareness of internal processes (Marlowe et al., 2015). Marlowe et al. (2015) explained that mindfulness practice can help with obtaining greater self-awareness by observing and acknowledging our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Marlowe et al. (2015) argued that students who are aware of what they are thinking and feeling are able to evaluate themselves and recognize stressful moments.

Similarly, therapeutic presence is the ability to be completely present with clients in helping relationships (Coholic, 2019). The ability to connect and be fully present with clients will ultimately contribute to a positive and effective therapeutic relationship (Coholic, 2019). Gockel, Cain, Malove, and James (2013) believed that mindfulness training can be utilized as a strategy for enhancing therapeutic effectiveness and studied the benefits of including 15 minutes of mindfulness practice during a graduate level social work class. Mindfulness practices were integrated to assist students with strengthening their clinical skills and effectiveness within practice (Gockel et al., 2013). Gockel et al. (2013) concluded that mindfulness training helped social work students at the graduate level increase their sense of self-awareness, improve focus, and manage anxiety which helped them successfully respond to the needs of clients.

The academic literature that I reviewed explained the benefits of engaging in mindfulness training and/or practices, self-reflection, and reflexivity. In conclusion, I believe that mindfulness

practice, self-reflection, and reflexivity will increase my sense of self-awareness and help me to become a more effective and present practitioner. The following section will explore the benefits of delivering mindfulness-based interventions in schools.

Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Schools

Over the past several years, we have witnessed the growing popularity of using mindfulness-based interventions that teach mindfulness in an effort to improve well-being (Burke, 2010). There is a collection of school mindfulness projects being delivered to all students, not solely those who are identified with a mental health problem (Weare, 2013). Weare (2013) explained that providing mindfulness practices to youth continues to develop and has been proven to be an effective intervention that can address a large assortment of concerns. Weare (2013) also stated that properly delivered mindfulness interventions “can improve well-being, sleep, self-esteem, calmness, relaxation, self-regulation, awareness and aspects of cognitive function and physical health” (p. 150). These interventions can also address worrying, anxiety, stress, and poor emotion regulation (Weare, 2013). Promoting wellness and mental health through mindfulness-based programs in schools can become an important part of school life and culture (Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005).

Napoli, Krech, and Holley (2005) argued that implementing mindfulness training into the school curriculum would be beneficial for teachers. Although the practical application of this statement is not identified in the literature, I suggest that this may be possible by school-based social workers and trained teachers introducing the benefits of these programs to principals, school board administrators, and teachers. Napoli, Krech, and Holley (2005) explained that there would be less interruptions in the classroom throughout the school day because students and teachers would have the tools to manage various difficult situations. Furthermore, mindfulness-

based interventions possess the unique ability to target a wide range of concerns that youth may be experiencing. There are several programs utilized by schools that have shown to be successful in delivering mindfulness concepts. For example, the Mindful Schools (Kielty, Gilligan, & Staton, 2017), Learning to BREATHE (Broderick & Metz, 2009), and Mindfulness Ambassador Council (Smith-Carrier, Koffler, Mishna, Wallwork, Daciuk, & Zeger, 2015) programs were successful in delivering mindfulness concepts in both Canadian and American schools. Weare (2013) argued that practicing mindfulness is linked to positive well-being, positive emotions, and friendship building, and should be implemented into mainstream education. Weare (2013) suggested that the engagement in mindfulness practice can pose benefits for both students and staff, and can improve well-being, and mental and physical health.

Kielty, Gilligan, and Staton (2017) reported that when creating and implementing any school intervention, including school staff, students, families, and the community in mindfulness training will enhance student well-being. Kielty, Gilligan, and Staton (2017) explained that the Mindful Schools program is a 15-lesson school curriculum that consists of a series of tests and activities that include “mindful breathing, listening, and empathy” (p. 130). They found that once the 15-lesson program concluded, teacher rating scales for student behaviours of “attention, social compliance and showing care for others” (p. 130) presented substantial improvements (Kielty, Gilligan, & Staton, 2017).

Broderick and Metz (2009) discussed the Learning to BREATHE program as a mindfulness classroom curriculum for adolescents. This program was designed to support emotion regulation skills through mindfulness practice and is proven to increase emotion regulation and well-being in adolescents (Broderick & Metz, 2009). The program is based on helping students understand their thoughts and feelings in addition to learning and practicing

mindfulness skills to work through negative emotions (Broderick & Metz, 2009). The program consists of six sessions and focuses on the acronym entitled BREATHE: “Body awareness, understanding and working with thoughts, understanding and working with feelings, integrating awareness of thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations, reducing harmful self-judgments, and integrating mindful awareness into daily life” (Broderick & Metz, 2009, p. 38). Students who participated in this program reported “decreased negative affect and increased feelings of calmness, relaxation, and self-acceptance” (Broderick & Metz, 2009, p. 35). In addition, an improvement in emotional regulation and a decrease in fatigue and pain were reported in the treatment group following the program (Broderick & Metz, 2009).

Smith-Carrier et al. (2015) studied the benefits and challenges of providing the Mindfulness Ambassador Council (MAC) programme to students and educators at a secondary school in Toronto, Ontario. The MAC programme was created by Mindfulness Without Borders (Smith-Carrier et al., 2015). Mindfulness Without Borders provided a one-day mindfulness skills and concepts training for Toronto Catholic District School Board teachers to encourage implementing mindfulness into their classrooms (Smith-Carrier et al., 2015). The MAC programme sessions cover mindfulness topics and activities once a week for 12 weeks for approximately 60-90 minutes (Smith-Carrier et al., 2015).

Smith-Carrier et al. (2015) found that mindfulness training in schools can foster self-growth in both teachers and students. A substantial number of educators reported improvements in both their personal and professional relationships upon completion of this programme (Smith-Carrier et al., 2015). Educators also reported that this mindfulness training was beneficial because it promoted calmness, stress-reduction and relaxation techniques, and improved their ability to overcome difficult situations (Smith-Carrier et al., 2015). In addition, students also

indicated that MAC training provided effective stress reduction and relaxation techniques, and skills for recognizing and regulating emotions (Smith-Carrier et al., 2015). Various students also reported that this programme helped to improve their focus and concentration (Smith-Carrier et al., 2015).

Despite the substantial benefits reported by both teachers and students, many students shared that they felt uncomfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings when in the large group setting (Smith-Carrier et al., 2015). Other students recommended that the MAC programme could be more engaging if facilitators included creative components to the training (Smith-Carrier et al., 2015). Although this study reported substantial benefits of providing mindfulness training to both students and teachers, it is important to consider that there can also be many potential benefits when mindfulness is taught in a creative manner. Arts-based methods can be engaging and enjoyable for students of all ages.

In conclusion, practicing mindfulness has been proven to benefit students in various ways (Weare, 2013). Benefits of practicing mindfulness include “the ability to feel calm and in control of one’s emotions, to make meaningful relationships, to accept experience without denying the facts, to manage difficult feelings, and to be resilient, compassionate and empathic” (Weare, 2013, p. 149). The next section will discuss the benefits of incorporating arts-based and creative methods into social work practice with youth.

Arts-Based and Creative Methods

According to Huss and Sela-Amit (2019), arts have often been incorporated into social work practice with clients and communities, however, a limited number of practitioners explore how arts can be applied in social work practice. There is a lack of research conducted to show the benefits of implementing art in social work practice (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2019). Therefore,

the potential benefits for using art in social work practice are often ignored (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2019). The arts allow clients to share and reflect on personal experiences which could allow researchers to better understand their circumstances and experiences (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2019). The practitioner can explore the art and find ways to enhance strengths and resilience while empowering the client (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2019).

Huss and Sela-Amit (2019) noted various limitations for using arts-based methods. Clients may be uncomfortable participating in arts-based methods because they are lacking artistic ability (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2019). In addition, adults may feel disrespected when asked to participate in arts-based methods as it can be viewed as an immature exercise (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2019). However, various types of art-based therapies can provide various benefits to clients who may not benefit from talk therapies (Crenshaw, 2006). Increasingly, mental health professionals are implementing expressive therapies in their practice because of the benefits that traditional talk therapies do not offer (Malchiodi, 2005a). Despite the strengths and limitations of incorporating art into social work practice, it is reasonable to consider that arts-based group methods can help youth explore their own feelings and thoughts. Arts-based group methods invite participants to discuss their creations with individuals who could potentially understand and relate to their circumstances.

Coholic (2019) explained that arts-based and experiential methods encourage individuals to express themselves in creative ways, model and teach various concepts, and enhance strengths and group cohesion. Arts-based and experiential methods are considered to be engaging and fun for youth to participate in (Coholic, 2019). Youth who participate in these methods have the ability to design their artwork and have the freedom to decide what they are comfortable sharing about their work (Coholic, 2019). Clinicians and therapists who integrate creativity in therapy

also empower clients to become actively involved in their own treatment (Malchiodi, 2005a). It is important for clinicians to consider that although creative methods do not have large amounts of data to support their use, they do play an important role in treating trauma and mental health problems (Crenshaw, 2006).

The following study featured an arts-based mindfulness classroom intervention called Move-Into-Learning (MIL). The study conducted by Klatt, Harpster, Browne, White, and Case-Smith (2013) investigated teacher assessments of an eight-week school-based mindfulness-based intervention entitled Move-Into-Learning (MIL). MIL was implemented in two third grade classrooms at a school located in an impoverished neighbourhood (Klatt et al., 2013). MIL was created to decrease stress and improve behaviour amongst elementary students who were considered to be at-risk (Klatt et al., 2013). Klatt et al. (2013) described that the program design focused on mindfulness meditation practices, yoga accompanied by breathing exercises, in addition to Appreciative Inquiry (AI) activities. Klatt et al. (2013) explained that AI activities were designed to invite students to express themselves through writing or creative arts as a method to decrease stress and improve behaviours. AI generated discussion with participants about positive skills, supports, and coping strategies that exist in their lives (Klatt et al., 2013).

Klatt et al. (2013) argued that it is important to introduce coping skills in the classroom during the early years because they can be used throughout children's lives. Klatt et al. (2013) concluded that the arts-based mindfulness intervention MIL was an appropriate and effective program to introduce in a third-grade classroom. MIL and other school-based mindfulness-based interventions that incorporate yoga, meditation, writing, and art exercises can decrease stress and improve student behaviours in impoverished settings (Klatt et al., 2013). MIL evaluations, including teacher interviews and a rating scale, demonstrated a significant improvement in

classroom behaviours (Klatt et al., 2013). School-based interventions and mental health promotion methods should introduce coping skills in the classroom as they are proven to provide many benefits for children and youth.

Another study investigated the benefits of a visual arts intervention for youth who were experiencing challenges. Macpherson, Hart, and Heaver (2016) studied 10 weekly arts workshops that build resilience for youth who are facing mental health concerns and/or learning difficulties. Art activities were used to educate youth about resilience in an effort to increase their overall resilience (Macpherson, Hart, & Heaver, 2016). Macpherson, Hart, and Heaver (2016) discovered that youth participation in visual arts intervention improved resilience and the ability to manage negative feelings and fostered a sense of belonging. Macpherson, Hart, and Heaver (2016) concluded that it is appropriate to use arts-based approaches when building resilience. It is evident that youth can work collaboratively and inclusively in group to build resilience through arts-based methods.

As highlighted above, there are an abundance of benefits to delivering mindfulness curriculums and interventions in schools. However, it is important to consider that teaching mindfulness concepts through arts-based methods and group work are unique and offer a creative and strengths-based approach that ultimately works to promote resilience and build upon strengths. For example, the Holistic Arts-Based Program (HAP) is a strengths-based group program that is designed to support participants with building their capacities, skills, and strengths by learning and practicing mindfulness concepts in a creative manner (Coholic, 2019). Mindfulness teachings include learning how to focus, notice and explore feelings, thoughts, and behaviours, and strengthen resilience by enhancing personal strengths (Coholic, 2019). HAP groups consist of 12-weekly sessions that run for two hours. The group begins with a warm-up

activity called a primer activity. Following the primer, various arts-based experiential activities are completed prior to snack break. Next, facilitators introduce more arts-based mindfulness activities and end with a closing activity that allows the group to reflect on what they liked, what they found challenging, and what they learned. The arts-based mindfulness group is creative and flexible, meaning the methods used can reflect the needs, cultures, and goals of each individual participant (Coholic, Eys, & Loughheed, 2012).

HAP is unique because facilitators teach mindfulness concepts in creative ways while participating in each activity. Facilitators are always modelling which promotes a strengths-based approach based on equality (Coholic, 2019). For example, when one facilitator is leading a meditation activity during group, the other facilitators are modelling and participating in this activity with the youth. The goals of this program include teaching mindfulness skills in creative ways, improving self-awareness, understanding thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, and enhancing self-compassion and empathy while building resilience and acknowledging strengths (Coholic, 2019). Coholic (2011) explored the effectiveness of HAP as a way to build self-awareness and resilience in children. After group completion, some participants reported enjoying the program and developing self-awareness, self-esteem, and felt confident and happier (Coholic, 2011). Participants also learned emotion regulation and how to express feelings in healthy ways which contributed to better coping at school and at home (Coholic, 2011).

Coholic, Schinke, Oghene, Dano, Jago, McAlister, and Grynspar (2019) explained that the Holistic Arts-Based Program research team discovered that marginalized youth are often unable to participate in traditional mindfulness-based interventions that solely practice meditation. These meditation activities encourage youth to focus and sit quietly causing a great deal of frustration and discomfort (Coholic et al., 2019). Therefore, arts-based methods were

implemented in order to teach mindfulness skills and concepts to youth in an engaging and enjoyable manner (Coholic et al., 2019).

Coholic, Eys, and Loughheed (2012) acknowledged that marginalized youth often require services that are not easily accessible and believe HAP offers youth a preventative service that can positively contribute to their mental health and well-being. Facilitating HAP in schools can also provide youth the opportunity to access a program due to the convenience of attending group in school. This is important to consider because some families may not have access to transportation to seek community mental health services. The following section will discuss gaps in the literature.

Gaps in the Literature

Although there is an abundance of articles that focus on mindfulness-based interventions with youth, it was difficult to locate articles that taught mindfulness concepts in schools through creative methods. Similarly, Macpherson, Hart, and Heaver (2016) addressed that there is minimal discussion within the literature about specific benefits for youth who participate in group visual arts programs. Huss and Sela-Amit (2019) also stated that there is a limited amount of data to prove the effectiveness of using art in social work practice with clients and communities.

Based on the findings of past HAP studies, it is appropriate to assume that delivering HAP in schools will be beneficial and effective. HAP has proven to be effective outside of school settings and my goal was to explore how this program can be effectively implemented within schools. Delivering HAP in schools can promote inclusion, hope, foster a strong sense of belonging, improve coping, and engage students in creative ways. The amount of research regarding the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions with youth and students is robust.

It was logical to suggest that implementing an arts-based mindfulness program in schools would be beneficial due to the many benefits listed above and warranted further exploration.

Overall, delivering arts-based mindfulness groups in schools will complement the current model of the school board for early prevention and mental health promotion. In comparison to mindfulness-based interventions and curriculums, creative arts-based methods are unique because they encourage youth to build on their strengths and express themselves in meaningful and authentic ways. HAP does not operate through a problem-focused lens, instead, it advocates that youth are resilient and can learn mindfulness concepts through enjoyable and interactive activities.

Chapter 2 – Description and Process of the Advanced Practicum

The Master of Social Work advanced practicum was completed from January 21, 2019, to June 17, 2019. The advanced practicum took place at various elementary and secondary level schools within the Rainbow District School Board in Sudbury, Ontario, in order to fulfill the 450 hours required for completion. In this chapter, I will describe the advanced practicum environment and the process of implementing the Holistic-Arts Based Program in various schools. I will also explore the various learning goals that guided the advanced practicum, agreements and supervision methods, and discuss my role as an advanced practicum student.

Description of the Advanced Practicum Environment

The Rainbow District School Board was founded in 1998 and currently holds 13,109 students across 33 elementary schools and nine secondary schools (Rainbow District School Board, n.d.). These schools are located across Sudbury, Espanola, Manitoulin, and Shining Tree, Ontario (Rainbow District School Board, n.d.). The Rainbow District School Board Mental Health Team includes a Mental Health Lead and nine MSW level Registered Social Workers. Each school social worker is assigned to a secondary school and is responsible for providing services to the elementary schools located in that surrounding area. Each social worker works closely with school personnel, students, families, and community agencies. Rainbow District School Board social workers advocate for the needs of students and their families, as well as provide brief intervention and group programming in schools.

The Rainbow District School Board unveiled a Mental Health Strategy on September 25, 2018 (Rainbow District School Board, 2018b). This strategy is focused on addressing the mental health needs of students in order to enhance wellness in schools (Rainbow District School Board, 2018b). According to the Rainbow District School Board Mental Health Strategy (2018b), the

mental health team is dedicated to delivering optimal mental health services that are student-centered and guided by evidence-based practices and strengths-based approaches. One key principle within the Mental Health Strategy emphasized the importance of providing mental health promotion and prevention programming in schools (Rainbow District School Board, 2018b). The Mental Health Strategy is also focused on alleviating the stigma associated with mental health challenges (Rainbow District School Board, 2018b). These challenges are addressed early by implementing class-wide interventions (Rainbow District School Board, 2018b).

The Rainbow District School Board has adapted the three-tiered Aligned Integration Model (AIM) as a guide for providing mental health promotion and school-based mental health services (see Appendix A on page 86). Tier one allows educators to “welcome, include, understand, promote, and partner” (School Mental Health Ontario, n.d. b, p. 1) to increase the well-being of every student. Tier two concentrates on how schools can “prevent risk, offer support, and bolster protective factors” (School Mental Health Ontario, n.d. b, p. 1) in an effort to foster well-being for students who are experiencing mental health challenges. Tier three focuses on the collaboration of school and community mental health partners to intervene with students who are presenting significant mental health concerns (School Mental Health Ontario, n.d. b).

Presently, mental health promotion is a widely discussed topic within many school boards. Promotion occurs when educators can help support students with ways to “identify and manage their emotions, build and maintain relationships, deepen their identity and sense of mattering, learn how to manage stress, and maintain an optimistic outlook” (School Mental Health Ontario, n.d. a, para. 2). Ontario schools can deliver prevention programs and supports for

students with mild to moderate mental health challenges through school social work services (School Mental Health Ontario, n.d. a).

There are various regulated health professionals, including school social workers, who provide promotion prevention supports to students with mental health challenges (School Mental Health Ontario, n.d. a). School social workers are well-equipped to provide a magnitude of school-based mental health services. They can provide brief intervention, identify early mental health problems, deliver early intervention programs, and build partnerships with community mental health resources (School Mental Health Ontario, n.d. a). Working collaboratively with community mental health partners is an important role for school social workers because these resources can provide intensive and long-term services for students and families. Referring students and their families to community resources provides them the opportunity to receive appropriate assessment and treatment services that can better suit their range of needs. As explored in the literature review chapter, this school mental health promotion approach is well supported by research (Clark & Crandall Breman, 2009; Kielty, Gilligan, & Staton, 2017; Lynn, McKernan McKay, & Atkins, 2003; McManama O'Brien et al., 2011). The following section will discuss the advanced practicum training plan and the process of implementing the Holistic-Arts Based Program in various Rainbow schools.

Process of the Advanced Practicum

Training Plan

The advanced practicum was centered on facilitating Holistic Arts-Based Program (HAP) groups within the Rainbow District School Board. I received training in the HAP program during the fall of 2018. I was encouraged to engage in mindfulness practices, co-facilitate groups at the HAP Research Lab at Laurentian University and at a local elementary school, and read

Facilitating Mindfulness by Dr. Diana Coholic (Coholic, 2019). In addition, I read various studies that were conducted by Dr. Coholic and her colleagues that explored the benefits of using arts-based and creative methods with children and youth (Coholic, Schinke, Oghene, Dano, Jago, McAlister, & Grynspan, 2019; Coholic, Oystriick, Posteraro, & Loughed, 2016; Coholic, Eys, & Loughed, 2012; Coholic, 2011). Reading Dr. Coholic's book and studies allowed me to obtain a greater understanding on the benefits of delivering an arts-based mindfulness group program. The book also provided an in-depth guide on how to facilitate each HAP session.

I began engaging in consistent mindfulness practice during the fall of 2018. I practiced mindfulness by focusing on my breath through various exercises and incorporated mindfulness into daily activities such as washing the dishes, walking, eating, and showering. I continue to use these practices day to day in an effort to continue strengthening my mind and body awareness. I believe practicing mindfulness allowed me to successfully teach youth how to engage in mindfulness. In addition, these practices also helped relieve any stress that I was experiencing throughout the week. The combination of HAP training and engaging in consistent mindfulness practice was imperative. This process enabled me to effectively implement HAP within the Rainbow District School Board.

Group planning was also vital throughout this process. It was important to fully understand the concepts and activities in order to successfully model and facilitate them. Planning occurred before and after each group as various materials were needed for each scheduled activity. A group agenda was also created for each classroom that was participating in the HAP program. In addition, planning was crucial because each classroom benefitted from different group agendas. For instance, one classroom enjoyed beginning the group with a meditation as opposed to introducing an activity.

Implementing the Holistic Arts-Based Program

I was asked to facilitate HAP groups with Rainbow District School Board social workers and educators in various classrooms. Both regular and self-contained classrooms were selected for the implementation of HAP. Self-contained classrooms are available to students who require greater support at school (Rainbow District School Board, 2018a). Students who are placed in this classroom setting are often diagnosed with a Mild Intellectual Disability, various Developmental Disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder, or a behavioural exceptionality (Rainbow District School Board, 2018a).

Throughout the advanced practicum, I delivered the HAP program in five classrooms. Two groups were conducted in Intensive Support Program classrooms with students of various ages and grade levels. The other three groups were delivered in regular classrooms consisting of students in grade seven and eight. Each session ran for one hour and included three HAP activities. These activities were facilitated within the classroom with support from the teacher and social worker. As a facilitator, it was important to consider that delivering HAP in various classrooms could pose unique challenges such as time constraints and group sizes. HAP is typically delivered to a small number of participants for the duration of two hours a week for 12 weeks. However, HAP groups in schools were scheduled to run for one hour a week for 10 weeks. Self-contained classrooms typically have fewer students than regular classrooms. I was interested in exploring the strengths and limitations of delivering HAP in both classroom environments. The following section will expand on my advanced practicum learning goals.

Advanced Practicum Learning Goals

The advanced practicum was designed to develop and enhance my clinical skill set in both individual and group social work practice. In addition, I wanted to obtain a further

understanding of school social work, mindfulness, and reflexivity. I was eager to explore the benefits of delivering arts-based mindfulness groups and methods in school settings. The advanced practicum experience was guided by various learning goals. Learning goals served as a guide for the advanced practicum experience and enabled me to expand my learning in various areas.

My first goal was to further my skills as a school social worker through experiential learning, and to deliver optimal care to students and families who experience mental health concerns. In order to achieve this goal, I implemented the Holistic Arts-Based program (HAP) within classrooms at the elementary and secondary level. In addition, I provided counselling supports to various students, consultation services to families and school personnel, and completed referrals to community agencies and services.

Additionally, I delivered Kids Have Stress Too!® groups in an assortment of grade one and six classrooms across the Board. This program was developed by the Psychology Foundation of Canada and is focused on helping families and educators recognize and understand stress, and to provide children with skills to manage and cope with stress (Psychology Foundation of Canada, n.d.). I also co-facilitated a Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) skills program for adolescents entitled DBT® Skills in Schools. This program was developed by Dr. Mazza, Dr. Dexter-Mazza, Dr. Miller, Dr. Rathus, and Dr. Murphy (DBT in Schools, n.d.). This curriculum was created to help adolescents learn effective coping strategies and decision-making skills when experiencing moments of distress (DBT in Schools, n.d.). MSW advanced practicum students with the Rainbow District School Board were also encouraged to attend mental health team meetings when there was an in-service scheduled. These in-services were conducted by professionals from the community and focused on topics related to children's mental health.

My second goal was to enhance my knowledge of personal and professional self-awareness through the practice of mindfulness, and to reflect on my journey of consistent mindfulness practice throughout this process. I was engaged in journaling and self-reflection throughout my advanced practicum. I believe that consistent mindfulness practice and self-reflection strengthened my skills as a social worker and student. These practices enabled me to successfully deliver a mindfulness-based program and learn the importance of self-compassion and growth.

My third goal was to gain a greater understanding of mental health promotion and practice in schools. The Rainbow District School Board implemented HEADSTRONG committees throughout each secondary school. HEADSTRONG was developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada and is an evidence-based anti-stigma initiative that encourages students to eradicate mental health stigma in schools (Mental Health Commission of Canada, n.d.). I was able to participate in mental health promotion strategies in schools by joining HEADSTRONG Committees at each school and help plan school events that focused on eliminating stigma and promoting wellness.

In addition to joining HEADSTRONG, I also helped plan and facilitate three presentations for wellness days that were hosted at various schools. The first presentation discussed stress and provided strategies for managing stress. The second presentation invited students to participate in the Me as a Tree activity. This activity was used to emphasize the importance of respecting differences and diversity. Me as a Tree is a HAP activity that invites individuals to create a tree that represents themselves (Coholic, 2010). Each tree will be unique and contain distinct differences which leads to interesting discussions within a group setting (Coholic, 2010). The third presentation was focused on the importance of self-care. In addition,

Ms. Christine McInnes (a Rainbow District School Board social worker and one of my practicum supervisors) and I, presented to parents and caregivers about children and grief at the Rainbow District School Board Parent Involvement Committee event.

My final goal was to reflect on the combination of research and experiential learning in order to present the benefits of implementing arts-based group work within school settings. By journaling my learning experiences and observations as a HAP facilitator and student, I was able to reflect on the process of implementing arts-based group work in schools. Through journaling and reflection, I believe that I achieved each learning goal and identified the benefits of delivering arts-based group work. As a student, I was eager to learn from various sources. I was able to enhance my understanding from the literature, books, my supervisors, and the advanced practicum environment as a whole. The advanced practicum allowed me to work in a diverse set of roles. These experiences provided a wide range of learning opportunities as a Master of Social Work student. The following section will describe agreements made with the organization and the various supervisory methods provided to me as a student.

Agreements and Supervision

Rainbow District School Board's Mental Health Lead, Ms. Mary Jago, assigned me to two supervisors. Ms. Christine McInnes and Ms. Sarah Jokinen, who are both Registered Social Workers with the Rainbow District School Board and hold Master's degrees in Social Work. Agreements with this organization, including responsibilities and resources for facilitating groups, and opportunities for gaining direct practice experience were determined prior to beginning placement. Supervision with Ms. McInnes was continuous as we engaged in opportunities for debriefing following each HAP group. In addition, Ms. McInnes and I would also debrief with educators and support staff following each group. Debriefing and reflective

discussion allowed Ms. McInnes and I to further understand the needs of the classroom and receive feedback from school personnel. Supervision with Ms. Jokinen was also ongoing as we engaged in opportunities for debriefing following counselling sessions, groups, workshops, and family and school meetings.

Ms. McInnes and Ms. Jokinen have an abundance of experience in social work practice. Their feedback was imperative for both my learning and growth process throughout this experience. I would engage in discussions with both supervisors regarding future clinical sessions or groups and exchange observations. We would also discuss what went well and identify areas for improvement. Both supervisors encouraged me to engage in opportunities for critical reflection and reflexivity at the end of each placement day. Both supervisors also created an environment where questions and concerns could always be discussed. In addition, Ms. McInnes and Ms. Jokinen always ensured that my learning objectives and goals were being met throughout this process.

Dr. Diana Coholic was assigned as my first reader and Dr. Leigh MacEwan was assigned as my second reader throughout the advanced practicum experience. Dr. Coholic and Dr. MacEwan assisted with the coordination of this advanced practicum and supervised the process of completing the thesis portion. Dr. Coholic has studied the benefits of using creative methods to teach mindfulness to children and youth. Dr. Coholic's knowledge, experience, and supervision was vital throughout the practicum and the writing process. I was also a member of Dr. Coholic's research lab throughout the school year. This experience allowed me to further understand the HAP program and how it can be used to foster well-being in schools through a combination of group supervision meetings, 1:1 supervision, and peer mentoring/discussions.

Conclusion

Overall, the Rainbow District School Board provided me with an abundance of learning and social work experiences. I thoroughly enjoyed the time spent collaborating with educators, principals, educational assistants, and my supervisors to provide programs and services in schools. This chapter highlighted the many areas where I received rich learning experiences. These experiences were beneficial and greatly enhanced my advanced practice skills and knowledge. In the following chapter, I will provide a critical analysis of the advanced practicum experience. I will highlight my observations and reflections regarding the benefits of delivering arts-based mindfulness groups and methods in school settings.

Chapter 3 – Critical Reflection of the Advanced Practicum

This section of the advanced practicum thesis will reflect my observations and experiences as a Master of Social Work student and group facilitator in various Rainbow schools. I will provide various examples to highlight the benefits of delivering HAP in schools settings. This section will also discuss the importance of collaboration with school personnel, the implementation of the Holistic Arts-Based Program (HAP) in various classrooms, and how social group work in schools can enhance student well-being. I will also discuss the importance of teaching mindfulness using a strengths-based perspective and the power of using arts-based and experiential methods. I will also explore how my journey to mindfulness and critical self-reflection played a crucial role in the success of implementing this program.

I chose the Rainbow District School Board as my advanced practicum setting to further develop my learning goals and practice as a Master of Social Work student. Prior to pursuing graduate studies, I worked as a school social worker for six months at the Rainbow District School Board, and I facilitated groups and provided direct counselling to students at the elementary and secondary level. My time spent in this role showed me the importance of working collaboratively with school personnel and team members in order to promote mental health and well-being among the students.

When this experience came to an end, I reflected on my time in this role and knew without hesitation that the work conducted in schools is valuable. The ability to influence the lives of students and their families by advocating for their needs at school and in the community was a learning experience that I will never forget. After witnessing the positive impact of facilitating full-class groups with the support of educators, I quickly realized that I wanted to introduce a program that could better suit the needs of the school community as a whole.

Collaborating with School Personnel

There are researchers who emphasize the importance of using a collaborative approach when implementing mindfulness-based interventions in schools:

“We strongly encourage taking a wholeschool approach, partnering with individuals who naturally emerge as willing collaborators, in order to build students’ strengths and resiliency and to convey a universal message of support regarding the value and utility of mindfulness in education” (Kielty, Gilligan, & Staton, 2017, p. 134).

Kielty, Gilligan, and Staton (2017) advised that it is imperative to enter educational systems with respect for the current school climate. It is important to work with the challenges and strengths that each school presents (Kielty, Gilligan, & Staton, 2017). I agree that working to build relationships and respect within the school environment is crucial when introducing a new program in an educational institution. The Holistic Arts-Based Program is flexible and was adapted in order to fit the school environment. For example, due to time constraints and group sizes, we delivered the program once a week for 10 weeks from January 2019 – June 2019. By this time, classrooms were already accustomed to daily routines and schedules. It was important to acknowledge and respect the busy classroom schedules and work closely with educators to ensure HAP could be delivered at an ideal time for all persons involved.

Collaboration and partnerships can ultimately contribute to a positive classroom and school environment. This occurs because everyone is working towards creating a safe and positive school environment. In addition, it was important to have strong communication and partnerships with schools because of scheduling. There were many snow days, Professional Development days, school field trips, athletic tournaments, and school events that impacted the HAP group schedules. It was important to be both flexible and understanding when schedules

changed due to school events that were taking place. Collaborating and maintaining strong communication with educators was imperative in order to successfully deliver the program.

Prior to beginning placement, I wanted to examine how mindfulness programs should be delivered in school settings. In order to produce benefits when implementing mindfulness programs, “it is important to let the process unfold naturally over time, while building responsive and lasting partnerships with schools, taking into account each school’s unique culture and needs” (Kielty, Gilligan, & Staton, 2017, p. 128). Kielty, Gilligan, and Staton (2017) identified that these are the important steps to take in order to implement effective interventions. As facilitators, we strived to let the group process progress naturally. This allowed us to observe and understand the needs of each classroom. From there, we were able to identify how the program could be adapted for future groups. I will provide examples of how we adapted the program later in this chapter.

Building partnerships and collaborating with schools was also important to the group process. I was able to meet with teachers and educational assistants to receive suggestions and feedback on what their classroom needed in order to be successful. An abundance of time was also dedicated to planning, purchasing items, and consulting with school personnel. These little steps contributed to the success of implementing the program in various schools. This process required a great deal of support and collaboration between all persons involved including social workers, teachers, and educational assistants.

Collaborating with school personnel also allowed me to feel like part of the larger school community. As an external service provider, it was essential to collaborate with school personnel in order to deliver a successful program. Kielty, Gilligan, and Staton (2017) explained that it would be challenging for an external service provider to engage with students and staff if they

are not collaborating with school personnel and getting involved with the school as a whole. I believe that any external service provider should collaborate with staff as they interact with these students daily and can play a crucial role in enhancing well-being within their classrooms. The following section will describe the implementation of HAP in regular and intensive support program classrooms.

Implementing HAP in Regular and Intensive Support Program Classes

Regular Classrooms

The Holistic Arts-Based Program was delivered in three regular classrooms consisting of students in grade seven and eight. These HAP groups were delivered once a week for one hour. Each classroom contained large class sizes and required support from other co-facilitators. Classrooms typically contained approximately 25-30 students. I facilitated two groups with support from Ms. Sarah Jokinen and the classroom teachers. I also facilitated one group with support from Ms. Sarah Jokinen, Ms. Celine Charbonneau (Rainbow District School Board Social Worker), a student helper from another grade, and the classroom teacher. It was beneficial to have multiple facilitators in this setting as we were able to circulate around the room, assist with activities, and generate discussion with every student. We facilitated two to three HAP activities within the hour. Due to large class sizes, there was not an abundance of time to discuss and reflect on each activity. We often encouraged students to discuss the activity in smaller groups to ensure everyone had the opportunity to share with peers.

Various meditation and mindfulness activities were used within these groups. Students reported that they enjoyed shorter meditations because it helped them to relax. In these classroom groups, we also introduced a Singing Bowl activity. Students were asked to listen to the sounds from the bowl and raise their hand when the bowl stopped singing. We gave students

the option to keep their eyes open or closed for this activity as some individuals find it challenging to close their eyes during a meditation. The students were eager to use the Singing Bowl throughout our sessions. We linked this activity back to mindful listening and paying attention to the present moment, and students were able to easily grasp this concept. Students in all three classrooms reported that they especially enjoyed the mindful eating exercise. In one classroom, the teacher and students practiced meditation weekly. This group was quickly able to grasp mindfulness concepts and activities as the students engaged in weekly mindfulness practice in their classroom. In this HAP group, the students looked forward to learning new concepts and skills.

At times, students were not comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings in the classroom. This experience was similar to the findings from the article written by Smith-Carrier et. al (2015) that reported students were not comfortable sharing in the large classroom setting. To alleviate the stressors associated with sharing in a large group, we often invited students to share and discuss their creations, thoughts, and feelings in smaller groups. Due to the large class sizes, we often required a larger space to facilitate activities. We often used school art rooms as these spaces provided access to water, a sink, paper towels, and larger tables. In one group, we invited students to create space in the middle of the classroom where everyone could stand in a circle and share the animal that represented them. This strategy worked well as the majority of students were able to discuss their creation and listen to their classmates share. The students who did not share their creations expressed that they were uncomfortable sharing and listened as their classmates shared. This is one of the benefits of delivering arts-based methods. Students can still participate in the activity without sharing.

Intensive Support Program Classrooms

The Holistic Arts-Based Program was implemented in two Intensive Support Program (ISP) Classrooms. One classroom was at the elementary level and the other was at the secondary level. Each HAP group was delivered once a week for one hour. These classrooms contained substantially less students in comparison to regular classrooms. These classrooms contained approximately 6-12 students. Group attendance varied from week to week as school personnel informed us that absenteeism is not uncommon within these classrooms. Each group was facilitated by Ms. Christine McInnes and I with support from the classroom teacher and educational assistant. We also facilitated two to three activities within the hour with these groups of students. However, the smaller class sizes allowed us to spend more time discussing each activity in comparison to the regular classroom groups. We also introduced the Singing Bowl activity in the secondary ISP classroom as each student shared that they enjoyed this practice.

In the elementary group, frequent absenteeism was also a challenge. However, each week we would review the concepts and activities from the prior week to ensure students were updated on what was discussed. In this classroom, we began group with a short meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, or mindful breathing video. This was beneficial because it encouraged students to settle into the group following their lunch break.

After consulting with teachers and staff, we decided to introduce the Group Rules activity in both ISP classrooms. Staff expressed that some students with behavioural challenges required structure and would often need to be reminded about classroom rules throughout their school day. We also decided to include this activity because these groups contained smaller class sizes. Smaller class sizes allowed each group member and facilitator to contribute to the discussion regarding group expectations. Ms. McInnes always begins a classroom group program with introducing four group rules called “the four commitments.” These commitments include

confidentiality, honesty, respect, and being non-judgmental. We included these four commitments in the class Group Rules and collaboratively brainstormed more rules with each specific group. Both classrooms worked well together on this activity and helped one another write, spell, or draw each rule on the poster. This experience was similar to the traditional HAP group format where participants and facilitators work together and discuss how members should treat one another within the group.

The Group Rules activity was not delivered in the regular classrooms due to larger class sizes. In addition, these classrooms had already established class rules with their teachers at the start of the school year. In hindsight, although the Group Rules activity was not delivered in the regular classrooms, I believe all classes would benefit from working together to establish rules and commitments prior to beginning group programs. Facilitators should consider including this activity in future HAP groups in schools because they can establish group expectations with students.

In the secondary classroom, we began group with a brief check-in. This group commonly met with the school social worker and had established this routine prior to beginning HAP. These check-ins were especially helpful on weeks where we had not met for some time due to snow days, school field trips or long weekends. Group creations were often added to the walls within the classroom. These creations included Me as a Tree, Group Animal, Group Symbol, and Group Rules. Both Warm Fuzzies and Power Boxes are HAP activities that encourage youth and the facilitators to identify their strengths (Coholic, 2019). Students often placed their Power Boxes on their desks which remained there throughout the semester. Many of our students at the elementary level took great pride in their creations and asked if they could bring them home to a family member.

Students in one of our ISP groups worked extremely well together on activities including Group Symbol. It was remarkable to witness how well students worked together and supported one another throughout this activity. Each student discussed how they wanted to represent the group on a large piece of paper. During this discussion, they each identified how parts of themselves could be visually represented. This process enabled students to identify strengths about each other and take turns contributing to the Group Symbol. In addition, this group was extremely creative and would often add their own ideas to the activities. In HAP, we support participants who add their own ideas to the activities and arts-based methods (Coholic, 2010).

Warm Fuzzies were also showcased in every HAP classroom (regular and ISP) throughout the 10-weeks. Warm Fuzzies is an activity where participants decorate an envelope and add their name to it. Facilitators hang a piece of string to the wall and attach each envelope using clothespins. Group members are then encouraged to write positive messages about themselves and others and add these messages to the envelopes (Coholic, 2019). My supervisor and I decided to modify this activity by asking teachers to write a positive message for each student and place it into their envelope. This activity can enhance the self-esteem of participants and promote positive feelings among group members (Coholic, 2019). This activity was beneficial because our goal was to promote positivity in the classroom and ensure students felt included and welcomed. Many students acknowledged how difficult it was to write kind messages about themselves and were excited to read kind messages from others. Therefore, Warm Fuzzies is an excellent way to boost self-esteem and mood, and help students feel included and welcomed in the classroom. The following section will explore the importance of social group work in schools.

The Importance of Social Group Work in Schools

Group work is being widely implemented in schools by social workers as a method of supporting students to remove barriers to learning and allows participants to learn and practice various skills (Garrett, 2004). School social workers often accompany their groups with “toys, games, books, art, and published curricula” (Garrett, 2004, p. 88) and continue to incorporate a substantial amount of verbal discussion. Social group work uses a series of activities to teach various skills including “role-play, cooking, art, singing, puppets, rehearsal of new behaviours, story telling, writing, photography, drama, and athletics” (Garrett, 2004, p. 77). The HAP program is an example of a group program that uses a variety of arts-based and experiential activities to teach mindfulness-based concepts.

School social workers are never reluctant to adapt group programs (Garrett, 2004). Adapting group programs allow social workers to ensure they are supporting the diverse needs of their students and further developing group processes (Garrett, 2004). Therefore, the HAP program was adapted to meet each school group as each classroom had different needs and characteristics. Prior to beginning groups, we created a group schedule that outlined the activities to facilitate for each HAP session in schools (see Appendix B on page 87 for an example of the initial group schedule). As time progressed, this schedule changed drastically based on the interests and needs of the classroom. For example, in one of our smaller groups, we were curious about how well students were grasping the concepts. We invited students to participate in a Rock Closing in order to reflect on the session. Rock Closing is an activity where each participant has an opportunity to hold a smooth round rock that is pleasing to the touch, and express what they liked, learned, and found challenging throughout the session (Coholic, 2019). Rock Closing was a beneficial activity because it helped us understand what the youth liked, found challenging, and learned during the session. For instance, various students shared that they enjoyed painting.

Therefore, we modified the schedule for the following week in order to include a mindfulness activity that involved painting.

One example of adapting activities occurred in the elementary Intensive Support Program (ISP) group. We often accompanied the HAP mindfulness-based teachings in this classroom with visual aids. These visuals allowed students to practice and understand the concepts and skills that were being taught each week. For example, one week we invited students to participate in the Figure 8/Infinity Symbol activity. Figure 8/Infinity Symbol is a HAP activity that invites individuals to focus on their breathing while drawing this symbol (Coholic, 2019). The youth are asked to trace one side of the symbol while focusing on the in breath and trace the other side of the symbol while focusing on the out breath (Coholic, 2019). It was challenging for some students to draw this symbol. Therefore, we provided a Figure 8 image and asked them to trace it with a marker or pencil crayon of their choice. Students expressed feeling excited after completing this activity because that they could decorate the symbol and easily practice the skill while sitting at their desk. We also read various children's books about mindfulness to the class in order to enhance their understanding of mindfulness. For example, we read the book *Puppy Mind* (Nance & Durk, 2016) to our elementary ISP students. The students expressed that they really enjoyed this book and were able to describe why it is important to practice being in the present moment. This process highlighted the importance of adaptation and working in ways that support the needs of the students.

As a group facilitator, it was important for me to ensure positive relationships were being built throughout the 10 weeks. The group facilitator ensures that positive relationships are being built in order to create a cohesive and supportive group (Garrett, 2004). We were dedicated to creating positive relationships with principals, educational assistants, educators, and students.

Each person played an important role within the group. Teachers and educational assistants consistently provided support to the facilitators and participated in each activity. This was beneficial as facilitators and classroom staff were modelling the activities and were engaging with students as they participated. This contributed to a stronger group as facilitators could generate discussion with students when exploring their creations.

Group work presents many benefits over 1:1 direct practice with students (Garrett, 2004). Group members are able to provide and receive support from one another which fosters mutual aid (Garrett, 2004). This exchange enables students to feel helpful and begin to learn and support one another (Garrett, 2004). This process also enables students to build relationships which can foster a sense of belonging within the group (Garrett, 2004). It can also provide hope to students as they begin to realize that they are not coping with challenges alone and can empower them to resolve any challenges they are facing (Garrett, 2004).

I witnessed first-hand how the HAP program allowed students to foster a sense of belonging and build stronger relationships within their classroom. For instance, in one of our ISP groups, students were always willing to share and describe their art. This process always generated rich discussion amongst group members and each student provided support, kindness, and empathy towards the person who was sharing. Mutual aid was crucial as some students were brave in sharing their own challenges and ways that they have been resilient in their lives. Ultimately, HAP provided a space where this could occur. Facilitators encouraged group members to lead these discussions and provided insight and support when needed.

Student and Teacher Feedback

We consulted with the schools before the group started in order to provide adequate information regarding the HAP program. We also requested feedback from teachers during and

after the group ended. However, it was important for us to also request feedback from students. “Student feedback is clearly important when considering input from school constituents” (Kielty, Gilligan, & Staton, 2017, p. 132). We requested feedback from both the secondary and elementary classroom groups and many students were willing to share verbal feedback once the program had ended.

Students in one of the ISP classrooms expressed that this group helped them learn more about one another and grow closer. This is important because we want students to feel a sense of belonging. We also want youth to feel like they can be their authentic selves in the classroom. It was interesting that students who spend a large amount of time with one another do not know each other well. Students also explained that this group helped them realize that we all have great qualities. In addition, they shared that the group was enjoyable and made them feel safe. Programs like HAP should be implemented in classrooms because the group provides students the opportunity to learn from one another, support each other, and acknowledge each other’s strengths and capacities. In addition, the students and staff were extremely appreciative of the work we did throughout the school year.

Students at the elementary level also provided feedback after the 10-week program concluded. Similar to other groups, students shared that they had the opportunity to learn more about their classmates. In addition, they were able to describe many of the activities they learned and enjoyed throughout the year. For instance, one student was able to describe the Thought Jar and what it symbolizes. For this activity, facilitators present a jar that is half-filled with water and invite the youth to add beads to the jar that represent their thoughts and feelings. The facilitators then shake the jar and discuss how difficult it is to make positive choices when our thoughts and feelings are swirling around in our minds. Once the beads begin to settle to the

bottom, facilitators explain that when we apply mindfulness skills and concepts, we are able to see and acknowledge our thoughts and feelings, calm ourselves down, and make positive choices (Coholic, 2019).

Students were also able to describe how practicing mindfulness could help them both at home and at school. Take Five is a breathing strategy that can be practiced at any point throughout the day to help children, youth, and adults feel calm and focused (Muscara, 2017). Individuals are asked to place their left hand in front of them and place their right index finger on their wrist (Muscara, 2017). Individuals are then asked to slide their index finger up their thumb as they inhale through their nose (Muscara, 2017). Then, individuals are asked to exhale through their mouth as they slide their index finger back down their thumb (Muscara, 2017). This practice continues until each finger has been traced and the individual feels grounded (Muscara, 2017). One student indicated that they were able to use Take Five (or Star Breathing as some students called it) when they felt nervous before a school test or frustrated in the classroom. It is clear that HAP activities can also be used to alleviate stress in the classroom.

Students in the elementary ISP class shared that they enjoyed the Take Five/Star Breathing and Power Boxes activities. Power Boxes is an activity where youth are invited to decorate boxes however they choose (Coholic, 2019). "... a discussion is facilitated about power and control: what we control and do not control in our lives, what brings us "power" and energy and makes us feel good, and what types of things take our power away" (Coholic, 2019, p. 119). Facilitators also discuss how mindfulness practice can help us feel powerful when we are able to acknowledge and control our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours (Coholic, 2019). In addition, these students shared that they enjoyed learning about mindfulness and positive thinking. The

following section will explore the importance of using a strengths-based perspective when teaching mindfulness.

Teaching Mindfulness using a Strengths-Based Perspective

Using strengths-based approaches in social work practice guides how we understand individuals and their challenges (Coholic, 2019). Social workers are committed to providing activities that each participant can successfully complete (Coholic, 2019). In addition, social workers provide activities that will benefit the group as a whole and ensure the activities build on the participants' strengths and abilities (Coholic, 2019). It was crucial in these classrooms to provide achievable activities when teaching mindfulness-based skills and practices. Working from a strengths-based approach, we wanted to introduce activities that all students could participate in and complete. Some students experienced challenges with drawing and writing. Therefore, we modified various HAP activities to ensure these students could still participate. For instance, we practiced the Listen for One Minute activity during one of our HAP sessions in the ISP class. Listen for One Minute is an activity that invites youth to focus on any sounds that they can hear (Coholic, 2019). This practice encourages youth to practice being aware of what is happening around them and acknowledge how much can be missed when we are distracted. In traditional HAP groups, we invite participants to write down the sounds that they hear on a piece of paper and share their lists once the minute has ended (Coholic, 2019).

For this classroom in particular, some students experienced challenges with writing. Therefore, we invited each student to sit on the classroom carpet to participate in this activity. I set a one-minute timer and asked the students to sit quietly and listen to the sounds around them. We asked the students to listen to the sounds in the classroom as opposed to asking them to write lists that could be compared after the minute ended. Once the activity was over, this group could

successfully identify an assortment of sounds. These sounds included the classroom refrigerator, shuffling of desks and chairs, breathing, sniffing, and a fan. The students enjoyed participating in this activity so much that they asked us if we could practice it one more time. The students did an excellent job practicing the skill of listening to the sounds around them. This activity is an ideal way of explaining the importance of being fully present in the moment and can easily be adapted. We encouraged students to use this skill when feeling distracted or stressed within the classroom.

For session 10 of one of our regular classroom HAP groups, we invited students to participate in the Body Beautiful activity. Facilitators invite a group member to be traced on a large piece of paper. Group members are encouraged to write strengths about themselves and their peers on the appropriate body part (Coholic, 2019). The teacher and I asked students to form into smaller groups and work together to identify an assortment of strengths and capacities about members in the group. For instance, one group wrote “mindful” on the brain and “good listener” on the ear (see Appendix C on page 88). Each group presented their creations and were able to identify many strengths and capacities about themselves and their classmates. This activity is beneficial because it encourages group members to identify positive attributes about themselves and others (Coholic, 2019). This activity is important because it enables youth to acknowledge their strengths and capacities which can enhance their self-confidence and self-esteem (Coholic, 2019).

The HAP program strives to create a safe environment where participants can support and help one another. “Holistic arts-based methods offer an opportunity to engage children in need in a helping process that is supportive, strengths-based, enjoyable and non-threatening” (Coholic, 2010, p. 25). I believe it is important to create supportive and strengths-based

environments within the school climate. Applying strengths-based approaches and perspectives in schools can help students realize their strengths and capacities (Teramoto Pedrotti, Edwards, & Lopez, 2008). Unfortunately, for some youth, school can be an environment where they do not experience success or inclusion. The process of acknowledging strengths and capacities can support students in reaching their full potential (Teramoto Pedrotti, Edwards, & Lopez, 2008).

Responding to Challenges

When facilitating arts-based mindfulness activities, facilitators must acknowledge and be aware of challenges that may arise when teaching new skills and concepts (Coholic, 2019). Any behaviours such as not participating in an activity, walking around the room, or refusing to share their creation, can be viewed as challenging (Coholic, 2019). However, it is important to consider that some youth engage in these behaviours because they feel vulnerable and thus, safer from a distance (Coholic, 2019). There were times during group where students could be considered disruptive. Students would sometimes engage in side conversations when others were sharing, walk around, or exit the classroom. As a trained HAP facilitator, I was cognizant of the fact that students could be uncomfortable sharing in the group because we were challenging them to be vulnerable, or they might not have the capacities to sit still and pay attention for sustained periods of time. Encouraging youth to discuss feelings and practice awareness may be difficult because they have grown accustomed to avoiding unpleasant feelings (Coholic, 2019).

Within the HAP program, facilitators anticipate that there may be behavioural concerns that arise (Coholic, 2019). Facilitators will often highlight any challenges by addressing them in a way that promotes a strengths-based approach:

Importantly, we use points of conflict as important teaching moments to encourage youths to consider other ways of expressing their feelings, to normalize their feelings, to

teach more healthy ways of expression, and to cultivate skills such as understanding and empathy for others (Coholic, 2019, p. 85).

This strengths-based approach guided our practice in schools. We never removed or punished a student for presenting with behavioural challenges. When working from a strengths-based approach, we do not want to reinforce the idea that students are being “bad” (Coholic, 2019). We anticipated that there could be challenges in the classroom groups. When challenges did arise, we used it as a teaching moment and always reassured students that we would be returning the following week. We often asked students to reflect on their behaviours in the group and encouraged them to always be kind to one another. In some groups, we referred back to the group rules poster that was created during session one or two. This was a helpful reminder to students about how we can show respect to one another.

Working from a strengths-based approach, it was also important to acknowledge when students made positive choices within the group or in the classroom. For instance, Ms. McInnes and I were determined to acknowledge the positive behaviour and good choices that were made in one of our classroom groups. Students worked really well together during one session and we were eager to show our appreciation. We decided to write a large thank you message on a piece of chart paper and taped it to their classroom wall. We also acknowledged the positive choices that were made within group whenever we witnessed it.

Some students who initially were hesitant about the HAP group and having new adults in their classrooms eventually became comfortable with participating. These students began to join the group circle, participate in discussions, interact with facilitators, and share their art with the class. We never pressured students to participate in the group. We always extended the invitation to participate and then allowed them to choose whether or not they were willing. This strategy

was effective as a few of the hesitant students began to participate in later sessions. We allowed this process to unfold naturally as we believed students would eventually be willing to participate when they felt ready to do so. We allowed them to control when they felt they were ready to participate or contribute to the group. The following section will explore the benefits of using arts-based and experiential activities in school settings.

The Power of Arts-Based and Experiential Activities

Arts-based and experiential activities can be used to engage youth in meaningful ways (Coholic, 2019). These activities can also provide individuals with the opportunity to engage in self-expression in an effort to learn self-awareness and understand the experiences of others (Coholic, 2019). This process truly allows individuals to learn skills, concepts, and gain insight in enjoyable ways (Coholic, 2019). Many classrooms had experience practicing mindfulness in various ways with one classroom in particular practicing weekly mindfulness through breathing and meditation videos. Students thoroughly enjoyed learning new mindfulness skills and concepts through arts-based activities. For instance, in one of our ISP groups, students especially enjoyed the Group Animal activity and often referred back to it during the 10-week group. Group animal is an activity where participants are asked to draw or paint an animal that they believe represents them (Coholic, 2019). Some students were eager to draw more than one animal as they believed that many animals represented them. Each animal was then glued to a large piece of paper and we taped the final product to the classroom wall.

The Group Animal activity is just one example of how arts-based methods can be enjoyable and meaningful. Arts-based activities also allowed these students to be fully engaged in each concept. In addition, it enabled students to share their creations. The process of sharing and discussing their art was important as arts-based methods allowed students to learn how to

participate, share, and listen in a group setting. Many students were even brave enough to share and discuss their creations. As explained in the previous chapter, the Me as a Tree activity (see Appendix D on page 89) was used at one school to teach students the importance of respecting differences and celebrating diversity. The students expressed that they enjoyed working with an assortment of oil pastels to create a tree that represented their lives. This activity is a great example of how mindfulness concepts including acceptance and self-awareness can be taught in a fun and engaging way.

Arts-based approaches enable youth to recognize their thoughts and feelings, enhance their coping mechanisms through skills, and develop a heightened sense of self-awareness (Coholic, Eys, & Lougheed, 2012). HAP in particular was designed to help youth learn how to pay attention on purpose, be creative, and recognize their thoughts, feelings, strengths, and capacities (Coholic, Eys, & Lougheed, 2012). Arts-based methods in this group are also used to help youth acknowledge their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours non-judgmentally (Coholic, Eys, & Lougheed, 2012). The arts-based activities in classrooms did not require a substantial amount of art supplies or equipment. However, an abundance of paper was required due to the large class sizes in various classrooms. The supplies needed for these activities were always easily accessible.

Teachers and students often commented on the usage of arts in the group. They had not used arts-based activities in the past and were excited to see how it was being used in HAP. One of our ISP groups were extremely creative. Students enjoyed using various art supplies to complete each activity. Many of these students took their time to complete their art and enjoyed sharing their finished product at the end of group. Other students completed their art but were not comfortable sharing with the class. This group would have benefitted from an additional hour of

HAP during the week as they enjoyed spending time on their artwork. Art can be used as a method of appreciating and understanding the experiences of others (Sinding, Warren, & Paton, 2014). Art can also enable individuals to express and release any feelings, hopes, experiences, or memories that are kept internally (Sinding, Warren, & Paton, 2014). Some students were concerned about participating in art activities because they felt as though they lacked artistic skills. Group facilitators always encouraged students to remember that the focus of this group was not the art. Rather, it was about learning mindfulness in fun and engaging ways.

Many classroom groups, social workers, and teachers enjoyed the Bad Day Better activity (see Appendix E on page 90). This arts-based activity helps participants discuss how we have the power to “make our bad days better depending on a number of factors including what we focus on, the choices we make about our feelings and thoughts, how grateful we feel, and how we non-judgmentally accept our bad days or moments” (Coholic, 2019, p. 51). Each youth is given a piece of paper and instructed to fold it in half and paint what a bad day would look like on the left side. Facilitators then instruct youth to fold it in half again in order for the bad day painting to transfer onto the right side. Facilitators then ask youth to turn the bad day painting on the right side into a good day. Youth can then fold the paper together to allow the good day to transfer onto the other side (Coholic, 2019).

After students discussed their paintings, facilitators explained the importance of acknowledging that we all experience bad days. My supervisors and I explained that there are things we can do to make our day better. Students provided great examples of how they can make their day better. For instance, one student explained that they make their bad day better by listening to music. Another student explained that they play sports to make their bad day better. This message was understood by everyone and the visual representation helped students grasp

this concept. Teachers expressed that they often referred back to this activity when students were experiencing a challenging day.

Teaching mindfulness through arts-based and experiential methods in schools also has the ability to enhance well-being as youth learn new coping skills and strategies. For example, students in one of the ISP classrooms shared their appreciation for the HAP group in a thank you card:

“Did you know that we use some of the exercises you taught us? We really wanna thank you for giving us more ‘tools’ for our personal toolbox. You gave us the opportunity to learn and practice new coping strategies. We really respect your creativity, you’re an awesome social worker! You’re such a sweet, caring, bubbly, lovable person. Everything you did for us was very HAPFUL!”.

In conclusion, there are many benefits to using arts-based and experiential activities to teach mindfulness. Youth enjoy participating in activities that are arts-based and experiential because they are meaningful and enjoyable. HAP strives to keep participants actively engaged throughout the group by using arts-based and experiential activities (Coholic, 2010). Art and creative methods enable children to illustrate thoughts, feelings, and experiences that they have not explored in the past or have difficulty expressing (Malchiodi, 2005b). Social workers have the ability to empower clients by exploring their art and finding ways to enhance client strengths and resilience (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2019). I believe that it is extremely important to provide group programming like HAP in schools. HAP provides a space where students can creatively learn mindfulness skills and concepts, and understand their thoughts and feelings in a creative and safer way. The following section will highlight how mindfulness practice and self-reflection can benefit group facilitators.

Being a Mindful and Reflective Practitioner

My journey to mindfulness began in the fall of 2018 when I became a member of the Holistic-Arts Based Program research lab at Laurentian University. I was encouraged by Dr. Coholic and my colleagues to begin engaging in mindfulness practices in order to successfully facilitate HAP concepts and skills. At first, I was hesitant because I thought that mindfulness consisted of meditating for 30 minutes to an hour. I was overwhelmed by the idea of sitting still and practicing for that long. Through research, peer discussions, and reflection, I quickly realized that mindfulness could be practiced in many ways. During a walk, I began to practice mindfulness by using my five senses in order to be fully immersed in the present moment. Suddenly, this new concept of being in the present moment was no longer intimidating.

Social workers can benefit greatly from practicing the skills they invite and encourage their clients to practice (McGarrigle & Walsh, 2011). This was especially true when implementing an arts-based mindfulness group program in the schools. Practicing mindfulness on a daily basis truly benefitted the effectiveness of each group. I understood mindfulness and the concepts that I was teaching because I practiced them in my day to day life. I believe the process of understanding mindfulness also benefitted my role as a facilitator. I was able to understand and acknowledge how difficult it can be for individuals (including the youth we work with) to learn a new way of being. We are continuously focused on what has happened in the past and what can happen in the future. Mindfulness is an important tool that can help us learn the importance of focusing on the present moment. Practicing mindfulness can also enhance a social worker's ability to be present, non-judgmental, and effective when interacting with clients (Turner, 2009).

I learned a lot about myself through a combination of self-reflection, group supervision meetings, 1:1 supervision, and peer mentoring/discussions. I was able to develop a stronger sense of self-awareness and acceptance. “The development of this heightened awareness, acceptance and curiosity about our own thoughts and feelings enhances our ability to see how clients engage in the same processes” (Turner, 2009, p. 99). Beginning to practice mindfulness can cause a great deal of frustration for new practitioners (Turner, 2009). Although the process of practicing mindful attention was a gradual process, I always continued to practice. I believe it is important to continue practicing and find which practice works best. The process became easier the more I practiced. My own experience with practicing mindfulness allows me to reassure new practitioners and youth to continue trying as the process takes practice and does get easier. Many people believe you need a great deal of time to schedule daily mindfulness practice (Turner, 2009). Clearly, we can easily find moments in our day to practice mindfulness, even if it is minimal.

Social work students are often encouraged to engage in opportunities for reflection. Throughout the advanced practicum, I was engaged in continuous mindfulness practice and self-reflection. I journaled about my experiences within the schools as an MSW practicum student and reflected on these experiences and learning opportunities. This process allowed me to successfully identify the benefits of implementing holistic arts-based methods in schools as discussed above. It is evident that the Holistic Arts-Based Program is suitable for school settings and provides a large assortment of benefits for youth.

During the advanced practicum, reflection and consultation with school staff enabled us to evaluate how we were facilitating. This process encouraged us to reflect on our facilitation styles and make refinements for future groups. In the beginning, I was focused on being a perfect

facilitator. I always wanted to facilitate an effective, professional, and fun group. Through reflection and mindfulness practice, I was able to acknowledge that this need to be perfect was hindering my ability to be present. I was always worried about each group going well. Focusing solely on facilitating a perfect group did not allow me to be present when facilitating. I began to immerse myself in the present moment and facilitate groups by allowing the process to unfold naturally. Being present was crucial because it ensured that I was attending to the needs of the group while being my genuine self. This practice of being present has allowed me to grow into a more present and self-aware practitioner. I believe that therapeutic presence was a large component of my professional growth and will benefit my ability to attend to the needs of my clients.

Whenever students appeared disengaged or uninterested during group, I often felt confused or defeated. I quickly placed the blame on my facilitating style as I was hopeful that all students would be eager to participate. However, in school settings, class-wide group programs are involuntary and there may be students who are not interested in participating. Upon reflection and consultation with supervisors, I discovered that students were presenting as uninterested or hesitant to participate because we were presenting a new challenge for them. We were encouraging them to be vulnerable in front of their friends, to engage in self-reflection, and share their thoughts and feelings in a large group. As social workers, we understand that this can be challenging for many individuals who participate in group work, even for social workers.

Self-compassion was also an important component throughout my learning process. I believe it is important to remember that being kind, genuine, and compassionate will contribute to a positive group experience. As explained by Malekoff (2014, p. 380), “mistakes are unavoidable, particularly in groups with children and adolescents.” Acknowledging that mistakes

cannot be avoided was important throughout this process. Practitioners, whether new or experienced, are continuously learning and growing. In addition, it is important for practitioners to consult with colleagues and write about experiences in order to learn and promote reflection (Malekoff, 2014). This process was particularly important for my growth and learning. I was able to learn and grow from these experiences in schools by engaging in self-reflection.

Conclusion

This chapter provided critical reflections of various experiences that I encountered while implementing arts-based mindfulness methods within the school system. As explored above, there are many benefits of facilitating these methods in schools. School social work has the potential to provide endless opportunities for effective strengths-based practices. HAP is an excellent program to implement as a way of fostering resilience, teaching coping skills, and build self-esteem and self-awareness in schools. Overall, HAP is a fun and engaging way to teach mindfulness concepts and skills to youth. Through arts-based methods, students can learn a variety of tools that will enhance their wellbeing.

Implementing HAP in schools allowed students to learn new skills, foster self-awareness, and build connections. HAP also promoted inclusion, diversity, empathy, and respect for others. This advanced practicum thesis provides an overview on the benefits of delivering arts-based mindfulness groups and methods in school settings. It adds to the limited amount of literature that discusses the importance of teaching mindfulness using arts-based methods in schools. Schools are the ideal place to implement arts-based mindfulness group methods. The benefits are endless when social workers connect with youth in fun, unique, engaging, and strengths-based ways. In the next chapter, I will provide a final overview of the advanced practicum thesis. In addition, I will describe the implications for social work practice and provide recommendations.

Chapter 4 – Conclusion

In order to fulfill the partial requirements for the Master of Social Work program at Laurentian University, I completed my 450-hour advanced practicum from January 21, 2019 - June 17, 2019. The advanced practicum was completed at various schools within the Rainbow District School Board, a local and the largest school board in Sudbury, Ontario. My primary learning goal was to explore the benefits of delivering arts-based mindfulness groups and methods in schools. Therefore, I implemented the Holistic Arts-Based Program with support from social workers, educators, and educational assistants in various schools. This chapter will describe implications for social work practice and provide concluding thoughts regarding the advanced practicum experience.

Throughout the advanced practicum, I assumed many roles and responsibilities. These responsibilities included the delivery of various group programs, joining school committees, providing support to families, attending school and mental health team meetings, and providing 1:1 direct practice to students. The learning experiences from conducting HAP groups in various classrooms enabled me to reflect on the benefits of delivering arts-based groups and methods in school settings. These experiences also enabled me to gain further experience working in a multidisciplinary work environment. My experiences building relationships with school personnel have taught me the value of collaboration and working as part of a team. The following section will examine implications for social work practice.

Implications for Social Work Practice

We continue to see how school boards are implementing mental health promotion programming in an effort to enhance student wellbeing. Students and their families are consistently unable to access community mental health supports and services due to long

waitlists and provincial funding cuts. Increasingly, school is becoming the place where mental health needs are being met. Listening to the feedback from students and staff reaffirmed the importance of the work that is currently being conducted in schools. It is clear that programs including the Holistic Arts-Based Program have tremendous value in various settings including schools. This is important for school administrators to consider as students spend a large amount of time at school and families are often unable to access services in their community in a timely manner.

This advanced practicum thesis described the benefits of delivering arts-based mindfulness groups and methods in school settings. This advanced practicum thesis adds to the limited amount of literature that examines the benefits of teaching mindfulness concepts and practices through arts-based methods in schools. It is important for social workers and administration to acknowledge the potential benefits of delivering arts-based methods and groups when selecting group programming for their schools. It is crucial to deliver HAP in schools because families may be unable to access services within their community. It is convenient for students to attend programs in school because some families may not have access to transportation to seek community mental health services.

Implementing class-wide prevention programs can benefit both school staff and students. School social workers are supporting the teacher's capacity to respond to mental health needs while providing evidence-based group programming. Teachers were extremely involved in the planning and facilitation process of HAP in schools. This collaborative effort was crucial and allowed us to teach the HAP skills and concepts to teachers and classroom staff. Our hope was that teachers and school staff could continue practicing mindfulness skills and concepts in their daily classroom schedules, not solely when HAP was being delivered. Therefore, it was

important to work closely with teachers to successfully model, promote, and teach these skills. It is important to note that HAP does not require an abundance of supplies or resources to be successful. It requires skilled professionals who are open to teaching mindfulness through arts-based methods.

Many teachers reported practicing these mindfulness concepts and skills in the classroom and in their personal lives. Various teachers indicated that they hope to facilitate the program within their classroom in the fall or teach various HAP concepts and skills. My hope is that there will be an opportunity for the HAP program to collaborate with school boards. I recommend that the HAP research lab provide training opportunities for school staff and school social workers. This will ensure that HAP continues to be delivered in various classrooms across the board. It is imperative that staff receive training prior to delivering a mindfulness group program such as HAP to ensure the concepts and skills are well understood.

There is value in facilitating an assortment of school-based groups including psychoeducational and social-emotional learning programs. However, HAP is unique in the sense that it is flexible, holistic, enjoyable, and engaging for youth. It provides youth the opportunity to learn mindfulness in a strengths-based and experiential manner. Strengths-based approaches assert that all individuals have a variety of “knowledge, talents, capacities, skills, and resources that can be used to help move them towards their aspirations, solve problems, meet their needs, and bolster the quality of their lives” (Saleeby, 2000, p. 129). Therefore, schools can provide opportunities for the implementation of effective, strengths-based, and meaningful programs like HAP. Furthermore, I believe that many of these activities and skills can be used by teachers in the classroom. Also, school social workers can easily use HAP activities in clinical 1:1 practice with students. There are endless opportunities for the delivery of HAP activities in

schools. The following section will provide my concluding thoughts regarding the advanced practicum experience.

Concluding Thoughts

There are many benefits of facilitating these methods in schools. School social work has the potential to provide many opportunities for effective strengths-based practices. It is clear that there are numerous benefits when social workers practice from a strengths-based perspective in comparison to a deficit and problem-based perspective. HAP is an excellent program to implement as a way of fostering resilience, teaching coping skills, and building self-esteem and self-awareness in schools. Overall, HAP is a fun and engaging way to teach mindfulness concepts and skills to youth. Through arts-based and experiential methods, students can learn a variety of tools and strategies that will enhance their wellbeing. Implementing HAP in schools allowed students to learn new skills and build connections with peers. HAP also promoted inclusion, diversity, empathy, and respect for others.

Art-based methods enabled students to express themselves and learn about one another in a creative and interactive way. Facilitators were able to use many arts-based methods as a way to promote positive feelings within the classroom. We wanted students to feel safe within the HAP group and feel as though they can connect with their teachers and peers. Ultimately, we wanted each student to feel as though they belong. Although this program was not initially designed to be delivered in schools, the activities can be easily adapted to fit school settings and the needs of various students. I believe that schools are the ideal place to implement arts-based mindfulness group methods. This experience reaffirmed the importance of engaging with youth and the benefits of providing strengths-based and holistic arts-based methods in schools.

Moreover, facilitating arts-based groups and methods in schools has the potential to foster connection. Connections were built between facilitators, educators, principals, educational assistants, and students. Not only are students building connections with each other, they were able to build connections with their teachers. Building positive relationships and connections was an essential component throughout this process. In the beginning, there were many students who were hesitant and unwilling to participate in our program. As the group progressed, these students began to stop us in the hallways to ask when we would be running the next session. In addition, these students were disappointed once our group ended. The power of building positive relationships with clients is often underestimated (Saleeby, 2000). However, building a positive therapeutic relationship with clients can be an important element throughout the healing process (Saleeby, 2000). Building positive relationships with staff and students greatly contributed to the success of our groups. Collaborating with staff and students was an incredibly meaningful experience.

Children and youth around the world spend a large amount of time using social media platforms (McCrae, Gettings, & Purssell, 2017). Spending time on social media websites is considered the most popular hobby among children and youth (O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). The rise in cyberbullying among children and youth is one of the primary causes for poor mental health and well-being (Cowie, 2013). Children and youth who experience cyberbullying often experience feelings of loneliness and isolation as they are excluded from peer groups (Cowie, 2013). These feelings can result in low self-esteem and depression among children and youth (Cowie, 2013). Therefore, the idea of connection and inclusion is extremely relevant in today’s world given the negative effects of social media use and how socially excluded many children and youth feel.

This learning experience highlighted the importance of practicing mindfulness. As discussed throughout this thesis, school social workers and practitioners can implement effective mindfulness programs by engaging in consistent mindfulness practice. I believe that mindfulness practice enhanced my ability to be a present and effective social worker. I was able to successfully deliver mindfulness concepts and practices in the classroom with the assistance of various social workers, teachers, and educational assistants. This experience also reaffirmed the importance of being genuine when connecting with youth. I believe that the process of building positive relationships with the youth and school staff contributed to the success of this advanced practicum experience.

This advanced practicum thesis provided a comprehensive overview of various social work approaches used in school social work and group work practice. It also examined the importance of practicing mindfulness in social work, how mindfulness-based interventions are used in schools, and discussed the benefits of using arts-based and creative methods with youth. This thesis also described the advanced practicum environment and my role as a social work student. The critical reflection chapter examined my advanced practicum experiences and identified the benefits of delivering arts-based mindfulness groups and methods. I also reflected on my personal and professional growth as an MSW student.

Overall, this advanced practicum thesis aimed to identify the benefits of implementing arts-based groups and methods in school settings. Schools are the ideal place to deliver strengths-based practices to enhance student resilience and well-being. The Holistic Arts-Based Program (HAP) taught students a variety of concepts in order to build self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-awareness in schools. Students also learned a variety coping skills and strategies to use at

home and in the classroom. Arts-based methods and group work allowed students to learn mindfulness in an interactive and enjoyable way.

My passion for the Holistic Arts-Based Program continues to grow. Not only are we teaching mindfulness concepts, we are having fun while building rapport and engaging youth in creative ways. Practicing mindfulness in my own life has enabled me to acknowledge the importance of learning self-compassion and self-awareness. I have witnessed this program and its ability to create a non-judgmental space where youth can be genuine and feel included. I am continuously astonished by the youth with whom we work. These youth are extremely resilient and brave. Their insight and participation throughout this process was extremely valuable. I believe that continuing to teach these concepts will create a positive impact on students, teachers, and schools. These learning experiences allowed me to recognize ways that social workers can promote wellness in schools and help to create mentally healthy classrooms.

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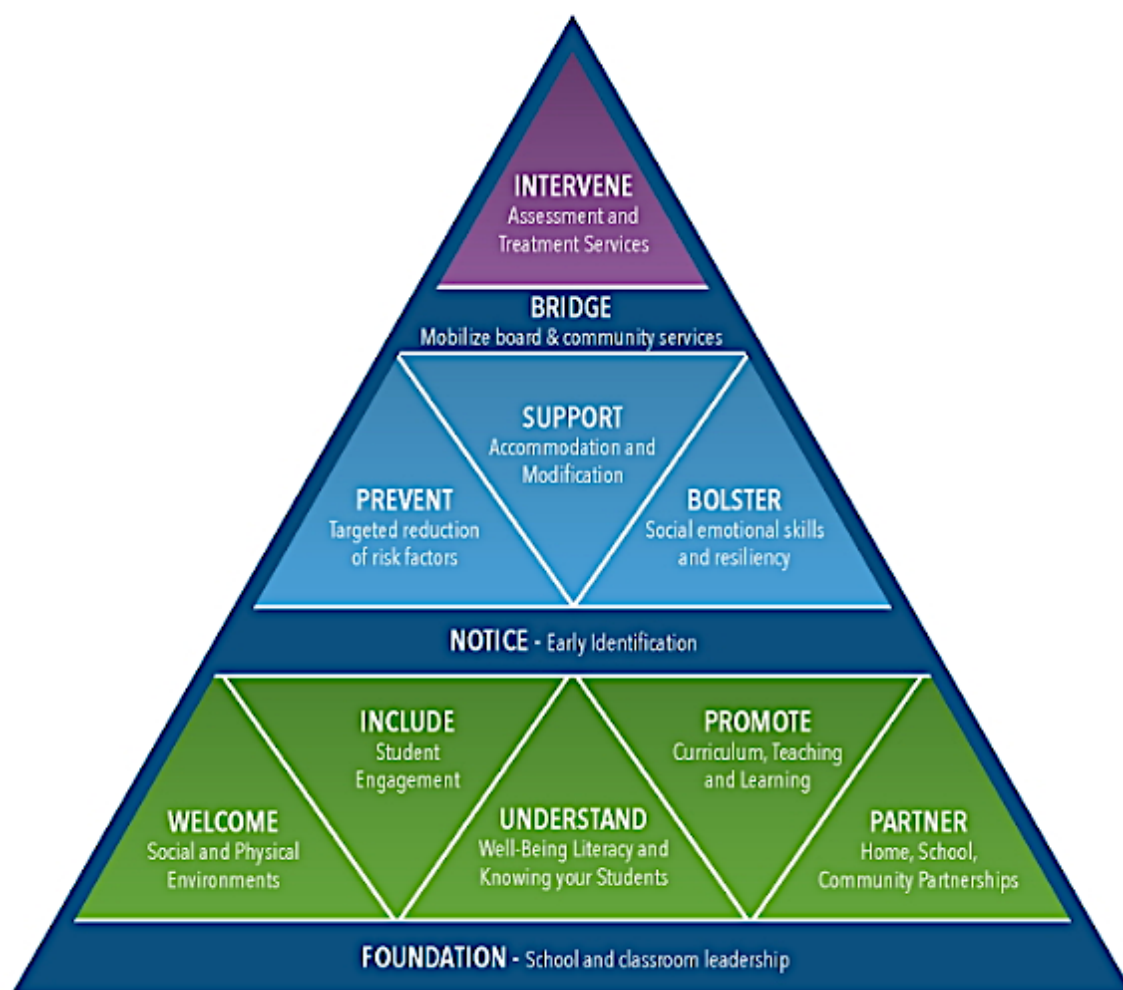
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Appendix A: Aligned Integration Model (AIM) (www.smh-assist.ca, n.d. a).

Aligned and Integration Model (AIM) for School Mental Health and Well-Being



Appendix B: HAP Sessions for Schools Schedule – 10 Week Program (One Hour Sessions)

Session One Warm Fuzzies Thoughts Jar
Session Two Take Five Doodle Draw Me as A Tree
Session Three Listen for One Minute Group Symbol
Session Four Infinity Breathing Group Animal Power Boxes
Session Five Guided Meditation (Visualization) Feelings Inventory Emotion Listen and Draw
Session Six Three B's Meditation J.O.Y. Bad Day Better
Session Seven Mindful Eating Dream Questions from the Jenga Blocks Create A Dream
Session Eight Mindful Walk Dream Script Draw A Dream
Session Nine Guided Meditation (Use Hoi's Visualization of being present in the room, step by step process to imagining the universe etc.) Group Island Body Beautiful
Session Ten Have a Discussion about what we have learned (Select a Previous Meditation) Recipe for Success Wish Stick

Appendix C: An Example of a Group Completing the Body Beautiful Activity



Appendix D: An Example of the Me as a Tree Activity

Appendix E: An Example of the Bad Day Better Activity

